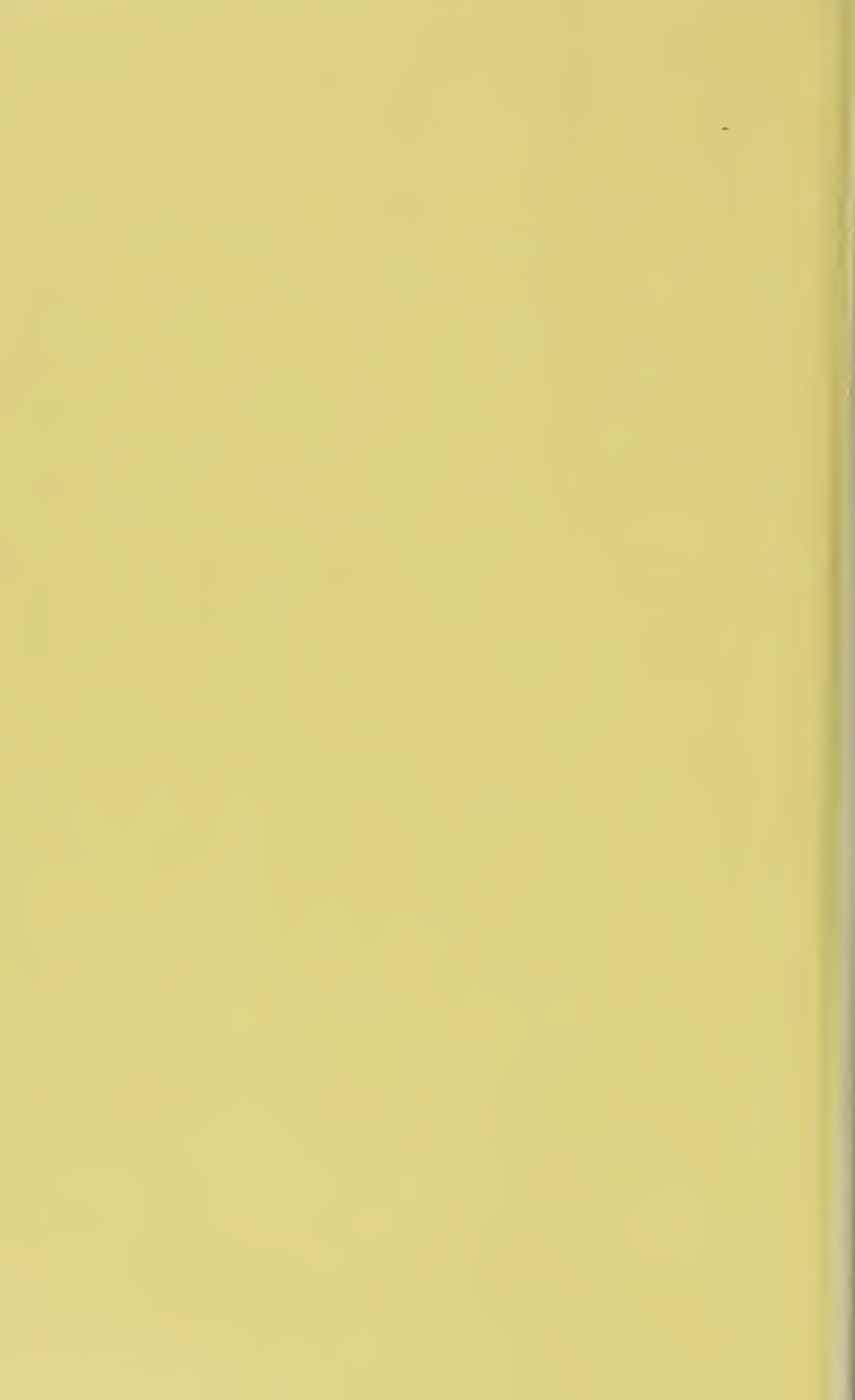


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Volume 73

1980

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British Birds

Volume 11 Number 1 January 1988



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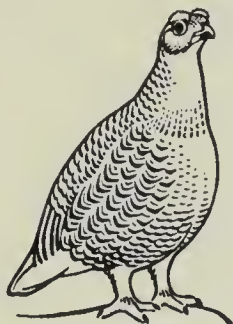
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British Birds

VOLUME 73 NUMBER 1 JANUARY 1980



Editorial

At a time when price increases are an all too familiar part of life, it is very pleasing to us and to Macmillan Journals Ltd that, due to the doubling of the number of subscribers in the past two years, the basic subscription price of *British Birds* can be held steady (at £12) for another year, despite very substantial increases in printing, paper and overhead costs. The concessionary rates to certain categories of subscriber have, however, had to be raised, since they had become completely uneconomic; but the new rates (announced in November, *Brit. Birds* 72: 554-555) are only 50p higher than the ordinary price five years ago. We hope that all our readers—long-standing and new subscribers alike—continue to support *BB*. We have no plans to make any radical changes in the journal's format.

The new year does, however, bring some changes. The saddest is the loss from the editorial board of one of Britain's best-known and most knowledgeable ornithologists: I. J. Ferguson-Lees. His resignation, effective from 1st January, was known to us in autumn 1979, but we have appointed no replacement on the board. James is, in our view, irreplaceable: the expertise and encyclopedic knowledge which he brought to bear on *BB* during his 27½ years as a member of the editorial team will be sadly missed. His work has always been meticulous: every aspect of each new topic being considered and then reviewed in the search for perfection. During 1954-72, when he was executive editor, James introduced many new features to *BB*, brought it up to date and consolidated its position as an internationally respected journal. The heritage of his achievements is still visible each month. Many readers will recall the *BB* of the 1950s and 1960s with affection and admiration: two emotions which every one of his colleagues on the editorial board still feels for James. His contribution to European ornithology, in a large measure through his executive editorship of *British Birds*, has been outstanding; knowing James, we feel sure that his contributions will continue into the future.

On the brighter side, we are delighted to announce that Dr J. J. M. Flegg has joined the Notes Panel. Jim Flegg will be well known, by name at least, to most readers, as a former director of the BTO and regular broadcaster as the ornithological expert in wildlife programmes.

Cape May Warbler: new to Britain and Ireland

T. Byars and H. Galbraith



Paisley Glen comprises an area of ornamental parkland and mixed woodland on the outskirts of Paisley, about 15 km from Glasgow. While birdwatching there at 14.00 GMT on 17th June 1977, TB's attention was attracted by an unfamiliar song in an overgrown part of the glen. On locating the singer, he was immediately impressed by its combination of exotic coloration and warbler jizz, a combination which suggested to him that the bird was a species of American wood-warbler (Parulidae). TB kept the bird under observation until 15.30 hours, while he took field notes, and then left to fetch tape-recorder and photographic equipment. Twenty minutes after returning, he relocated the bird, again by song, and at 16.30, after taking photographs and recording its song, he informed HG of the bird's presence.

From 17.30 to 18.30, we kept the bird under observation while taking field notes; during this time, viewing conditions were excellent, with little wind and low, flat sunshine. On comparing our notes with the text and plates in Peterson (1947), we quickly became convinced that the bird was a male Cape May Warbler *Dendroica tigrina* in breeding plumage. The bird was confiding and allowed itself to be approached down to 4½ m while it fed and sang among the trees and scrub. So frequently did it sing at this stage that we were both of the opinion that it had taken up territory and would probably stay for some time; unfortunately, this was not to be. At 19.00, there was the rather enthusiastic arrival of a group of local bird-watchers; with their arrival, the warbler became noticeably shyer and allowed only rather unsatisfactory glimpses of itself in the fading light; the following day it had gone.

This record constitutes the first for Britain and Ireland; indeed it appears to be the only reported occurrence, so far, outside the New World. The meteorological situation at the time has been described and discussed by Norman Elkins (*Brit. Birds* 72: 433).

Description

First impressions were of a medium-sized warbler with dark upperparts contrasting strongly with bright yellow underparts, rump and half collar, the yellow of the breast, belly and flanks being broken by conspicuous black longitudinal stripes. The crown appeared black and the cheeks and ear-coverts red-brown.

SIZE AND SHAPE Appeared somewhat larger than Willow Warbler *Phylloscopus trochilus*, probably about size of Garden Warbler *Sylvia borin*, though only former present for comparison. Same shape as Willow Warbler, but tended to perch in more upright position.

HEAD AND UPPERPARTS Forehead and crown black or very dark brown. Obvious yellow supercilium from base of upper mandible to slightly behind eye, where it merged with prominent red-brown patch covering cheeks and ear-coverts. Faint dark line through eye. Chin, throat, sides of neck and area between ear-coverts and nape bright yellow and, apart from throat, unmarked. Dark of crown extended down sides and back of head to meet supercilium, cheek patch, yellow behind ear and dark nape. Nape, mantle, back and scapular area dark grey-brown, but noticeably paler than crown, with conspicuous

black streaking forming distinct stripes extending from lower nape down over back, but not on to rump. White patch on otherwise dark closed wing formed by white tipping on median and greater coverts; at close range, this formed diffuse double wing-bar, but at greater distances it faded to a single patch: this feature, while not as obviously white as, for instance, wing patch of Chaffinch *Fringilla coelebs*, nevertheless very noticeable. Rump unstreaked, yellow and conspicuous both in flight and at rest. Tail notched and uniformly dark; no white seen, though no tail-flicking observed. **UNDERPARTS** Chin, throat, breast and belly bright canary-yellow fading into off-white undertail-coverts. Black streaking on breast, belly and flanks formed prominent continuous longitudinal stripes. **BARE PARTS** Eye, bill and legs very dark. Bill finer and more pointed than that of Willow Warbler.

Song and behaviour

During over two hours of observation, no vocalisations other than song were heard. The song consisted of one phrase of four notes repeated

1. Cape May Warbler *Dendroica tigrina*, USA, May 1978 (Adrian J. Dignan)



intermittently. Each phrase lasted from one to two seconds and can best be described as a flat 'swee-swee-swee-swee', repeated fairly quietly and with a slight nasal intonation. This song was delivered both from prominent tree tops and from deep in low-level scrub.

Throughout the period of observation, the bird frequented a small area of open mixed woodland and scrub-filled clearing, feeding mostly in spruce *Picea*, Scots pine *Pinus sylvestris* and rowan *Sorbus aucuparia*. Most food items appeared to be taken from the leaves of those trees, but the warbler was also observed flycatching on a few occasions.

Distribution and migration

As a breeding species, the Cape May Warbler occurs exclusively in Canada and the northern states of the USA, extending in a band from Nova Scotia east to Alberta, and from North Dakota in the south to Mackenzie in the north. Typical breeding habitat consists of open mixed and coniferous woodland. The main winter quarters are in the West Indies. Until recently (see below), the species occurred only sparingly as a migrant in the eastern USA and Canada.

Morris *et al.* (1958) and Kendeigh (1947) have shown that population levels of the Cape May Warbler rise—at times dramatically—during outbreaks of infestation by the spruce bud worm *Choristoneura fumiferana*. Hussell & Ridley (1978) concluded that one such infestation in Quebec and Ontario during the period 1969-77 resulted in significantly large increases in Cape May populations in these areas, resulting in turn in a greatly increased incidence of sightings at Long Point Bird Observatory on Lake Erie. Indeed, at Long Point, an increase of roughly 300% occurred

2. Cape May Warbler *Dendroica tigrina*, USA, October 1977 (Adrian J. Dignan)



between 1965 and 1975, with the Cape May becoming one of the most frequently recorded migrant warblers at the observatory. It may prove that a continuance of this high population will result in further occurrences in the Old World.

Historical note

Interestingly, the ornithologist who first discovered the species, Alexander Wilson, was born and spent his youth in Paisley; in fact, his birthplace could be seen easily from Paisley Glen.

Acknowledgements

We wish to thank Adrian J. Dignan for supplying his photographs and allowing their use in this paper; and Keith Brockie for his drawing of Cape May Warbler.

Summary

A Cape May Warbler *Dendroica tigrina* in song in wooded parkland at Paisley, Strathclyde, on 17th June 1977 was the first European observation of this Nearctic species.

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Rare breeding birds in the United Kingdom in 1978

*J. T. R. Sharrock
and the Rare Breeding
Birds Panel*



The primary function of the Rare Breeding Birds Panel is to provide a safe store for confidential information, so that this is collected in one file for posterity. In the past, details of important records have been lost forever through the deaths of the only people having knowledge of the circumstances; storing of confidential records in the scattered files of individual

county societies is also unsatisfactory, since they will not be easily accessible to researchers in the future and, inevitably, some will be mislaid over the years. Records submitted to the panel on its special forms (two copies of each) are filed in locked containers at two places, to guard against loss by fire. As the years pass, the accumulated information becomes more and more valuable. We are, therefore, pleased that co-operation from county and regional recorders is being maintained and, in many cases, is improving. A few societies or recorders do not supply full data for their most sensitive species (which are, of course, different in each area). We regret this, since the confidentiality of the panel is now thoroughly established and neither posterity nor present-day conservationists will welcome less than the full picture. We urge those who have held back information to supply data for past years so that the scientific record is completed.

Serving conservation is our second function. It is obviously important for the RSPB, the Nature Conservancy Council and others to know which species are increasing and which decreasing, whether breeding success is improving or declining, whether breeding ranges are expanding or contracting, and so on. Such information can be obtained only by collection of much otherwise confidential data into one central register, from which summaries (but not details) can be fed to the conservation bodies. The panel is funded and supported jointly by *British Birds*, the BTO and the RSPB; it also includes a representative of the NCC.

We believe that it is in the best interests of the birds for the fullest possible details to be deposited in the panel's files. Most county and regional recorders clearly agree, since we have now received 1977 information from every single area of the UK. So far, 1978 details have been received from 70 areas (fig. 1); 15 are still outstanding, but we expect to receive data from most if not all in due course. The policy in our published reports is to include information only when safe to do so, and provided that we have received permission: we publish basic details, sufficient for the purposes of most researchers and enough to give birdwatchers a balanced annual summary of the events concerning the United Kingdom's rarest breeding birds.

During 1978, the panel's members were Dr L. A. Batten, R. H. Dennis, I. J. Ferguson-Lees, Ian Prestt and Dr J. T. R. Sharrock (secretary). In May 1979, James Ferguson-Lees retired from the panel; he was, with David Lea, one of the founders of the panel and responsible in a large measure for its present successful methods. With the necessary approval of the editorial board of *British Birds* and of the councils of the BTO and the RSPB, Robert Spencer was appointed to the vacancy in October 1979.

Most records reach the panel from the county and regional recorders (see names and addresses in *Brit. Birds* 72: 446-449). Individual observers are strongly encouraged to submit their data via the relevant county recorder, although it is recognised that there may very occasionally be exceptional reasons for sending a record directly to the panel's secretary. The special forms for submitting records are available free from the address at the end of this report.

In this report, counties are named only when permission has been given.

Fig 1. Areas covered by this report. Records (or negative returns) were supplied for the 70 areas shown black. Some individual observers supplied data for the counties left white, but records were not received from the local recorders, and so the picture may be very incomplete for these 15 areas. The panel does not collect records from the Republic of Ireland



In other cases, code letters are used: these are the same as in previous reports, so that histories of decline or colonisation can be followed, even though the locations must remain confidential to ensure freedom from disturbance. This report contains a mixture of old and new county names: we have used those supplied by the recorders.

For most species, we have given a range of figures for 'pairs breeding', the lower representing the number confirmed breeding and the upper the maximum if, for instance, every singing male or single sighting represented a nesting pair. Although these ranges are often very wide, they can be consistently calculated each year and will, we hope, be valuable for comparisons.

With the appearance of this sixth report in the January issue, only five months after the fifth (*Brit. Birds* 72: 363-381), we have achieved our aim of reverting to our usual schedules. We hope to publish the seventh report, covering 1979, in the January 1981 issue.

Summary of the year

The summer of 1978 was remarkable for record numbers of several scarce species. Unfortunately, however, it was also cold, wet and windy, so that breeding success was generally poor.

Notable wildfowl events included the first proved breeding records of Whooper Swan *Cygnus cygnus* for more than 30 years and of Scaup *Aythya marila* for five years. The welcome colonisation of Scotland by Goldeneyes

Bucephala clangula continued apace, with the highest ever numbers of nesting females and of broods.

There were also significant milestones among the raptors. It was pleasing to find the number of nesting female Marsh Harriers *Circus aeruginosus* maintained at the high 1977 level. The numbers of nesting pairs of Red Kites *Milvus milvus* and of Ospreys *Pandion haliaetus* were both the highest this century, but, unfortunately, the poor summer had a disastrous effect on their breeding success. Hobbies *Falco subbuteo*, however, managed their most successful year for young known to have been reared, despite the weather.

The major wader event was the discovery of Purple Sandpipers *Calidris maritima* breeding in Scotland. The main colony of Temminck's Stints *C. temminckii* was still extant and, if it remains undisturbed, may act as a nucleus from which further colonies will arise. Also in Scotland, Wood Sandpipers *Tringa glareola* were in their highest ever numbers and Red-necked Phalaropes *Phalaropus lobatus* reached a post-*Atlas* peak, but production of young was low owing to the bad weather in late summer. Mainly in England, Black-tailed Godwits *Limosa limosa* were in best-ever numbers away from their main area, where, however, early summer rains may have had an adverse effect through flooding (Ruffs *Philomachus pugnax* failed to breed, possibly for the same reason). The second and third breeding attempts by Little Gulls *Larus minutus* regrettably both failed, as did the first, three years earlier. A pair of Black Terns *Chlidonias niger* was robbed by an egg-collector.

Wrynecks *Jynx torquilla*—almost written off as lost to Britain as a breeding species when there was only one pair in England and one singing on one day in Scotland in 1973, and none in England in 1974—maintained their high 1977 numbers in the Scottish Highlands. Marsh Warblers *Acrocephalus palustris* seem at last to be expanding their range in England; the pattern suggests scattered colonisation by overshooting migrants rather than colonisation from their western stronghold where numbers appear to be relatively stable. Cetti's *Cettia cetti* and Savi's Warblers *Locustella luscinioides* both had successful seasons. Golden Orioles *Oriolus oriolus* are clearly on the increase and 1978 was their best year yet. Another expanding species, the Serin *Serinus serinus*, produced its long-awaited third British breeding record, roughly a decade later than anticipated. Lapland Buntings *Calcarius lapponicus*, however, returned for the second year in succession, to give Scotland and our lists further arctic flavour.

Each year, the highlights seem unexpected or pleasing. In many cases, however, they are the result of much hard work, at desk and in committee room as well as in the field. Perhaps the majority of our annual successes would not exist if those with foresight had not established nature reserves in appropriate places to maintain the landscape in a condition suitable for the colonisations or expansions of small populations. Even now, wardens and regional officers of the RSPB, the NCC, the county naturalists' trusts and other bodies expend time, energy and money protecting the birds which we like to see or to read about. We hope that everyone reading this report will remember their responsibility to help those who try to protect our birds, by

avoiding taking any action which could jeopardise the good of the birds. For our part, the members of this panel all avoid visiting the sites of rare breeding birds, except in the course of essential work or when the finder requests confirmation of his or her discovery.

Not all rare birds are increasing, however, and 1978 saw exceptionally low numbers of several species. Slavonian Grebes *Podiceps auritus* and Firecrests *Regulus ignicapillus* were at their lowest levels since these reports started. There was only one confirmed breeding record of Redwing *Turdus iliacus* and none—for the first time since its colonisation—of Fieldfare *T. pilaris*. And no male Snowy Owl *Nyctea scandiaca* appeared to cheer up the lonely Fetlar females.

Systematic list

No relevant records of the following species were reported for inclusion in this report:

Great Northern Diver *Gavia immer*
Rough-legged Buzzard *Buteo lagopus*
Sanderling *Calidris alba*
Spotted Sandpiper *Actitis macularia*
Turnstone *Arenaria interpres*

Shore Lark *Eremophila alpestris*
Citrine Wagtail *Motacilla citreola*
Bluethroat *Luscinia svecica*
Great Grey Shrike *Lanius excubitor*

Red-necked Grebe *Podiceps grisegena*

None reported in 1978.

1977 Perth One site: adult on 11th April and 14th August, presumably summered.

This 1977 record is the second relating to possible summering in that year (cf. Gwynedd, *Brit. Birds* 72: 366).

Slavonian Grebe *Podiceps auritus*

17 sites: 37-51 pairs breeding, 23 young reared.

Inverness 15 sites, 35-47 pairs rearing 21 young: (1) ten pairs reared six young; (2) four pairs, at least three bred, rearing two young; (3) three pairs, but probably none bred; (4) one pair reared two young; (5) two pairs, one possibly nested, no young reared; (6) at least 17 pairs nested, at least ten young reared; (7)(8)(9) single pairs bred, but no young reared; (10) two pairs, one probably bred; (11) one pair, outcome unknown; (12)(13) single pairs, did not breed; (14) one or two irregularly, did not nest; (15) one pair reared one young.

Perth Four sites: (1) pair reared two young; (2) pair present until 12th July, nest with two eggs on 16th May, but no young seen; (3) pair on 30th April; (4) at well-watched site, single on 22nd April.

The lowest number of pairs proved breeding in any year since reports started in 1973: 52-53 pairs breeding in 1973, 58-63 in 1974, 39-43 in 1975 (when only eight sites visited in Inverness-shire), 70-75 in 1976 and 42-51 in 1977.

Black-necked Grebe *Podiceps nigricollis*

Six sites: 13-15 pairs breeding, at least 18 young reared.

County A Two sites, ten pairs rearing at least 12 young: (1) six pairs hatched 15 young, of which eight probably fledged; (2) four pairs hatched nine young, of which at least four fledged. 'Average season, minimal disturbance.'

County E One site: one in breeding plumage from 22nd April to 16th July.

County D One site: two pairs nested, rearing four young.

County G One site: pair reared two young.

County H One site: adult with juvenile on 5th August, but not seen previously and almost certainly bred elsewhere.

Average numbers compared with previous totals of 18-19, 15-18, over ten (no details from County A), 10-11 (no report from County A) and 11-16 pairs breeding during 1973-77.

Bittern *Botaurus stellaris*

15 sites: two to 27 pairs breeding.

Kent One site: two males booming from 21st May; one intermittent, thought to be almost certainly unpaired; second booming up to early July, thought to be paired.

Lancashire Two sites: (1) 11 males booming; (2) male booming.

Lincoln/south Humberside Two sites: (1) pair, thought to have nested, but not to have reared young, one bird from 30th January to early April, the male booming (occasionally and quietly) to early May, two together 28th April, one carrying eels and other fish during 10th-15th May, but none seen thereafter; (2) male booming on a few evenings, and two individuals on one day, in mid May.

Norfolk Six sites: (1) two males booming; (2)-(5) single males booming; (6) one nest.

West Glamorgan One site: booming heard from early spring to 25th May.

County A Three sites: (1) male booming 23rd April to 3rd June; (2) male booming 14th May, one seen 26th July; (3) male booming on 14th May.

1977 Lincoln/south Humberside Second site: (2) male booming quietly and intermittently in spring (and also in spring 1976), but no proof of breeding.

1977 West Glamorgan One site: booming heard from 5th April to 15th June, singles seen in April and July.

The total is lower than last year's (0-42 breeding pairs) for this declining species, but, as with many reedbed birds, breeding is very difficult to prove; it must also be noted that no report was received from Suffolk.

Little Bittern *Ixobrychus minutus*

No relevant records reported in 1978.

1976 West Glamorgan One site: male on 24th June and 6th August, presumably summered.

This is the first instance of probable summering noted in these reports; this species has yet to be proved to breed in the UK.

Purple Heron *Ardea purpurea*

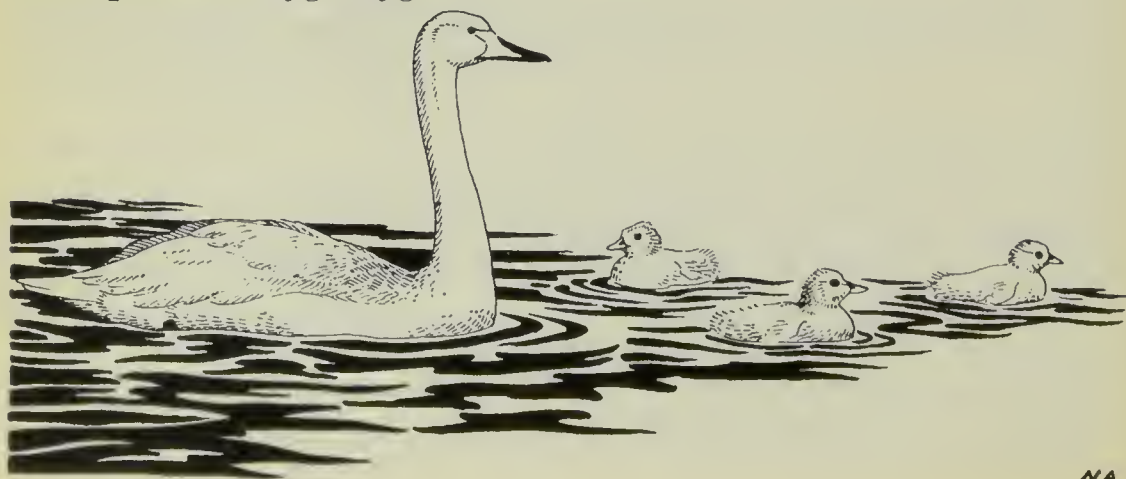
No relevant records reported in 1978.

1976 West Glamorgan One site: one during 21st-27th May, 13th-19th June and 8th-9th July.

1977 West Glamorgan One site: one during 28th May to 4th July.

These are the first cases of summering noted in these reports; this species has yet to be proved to breed in the UK.

Whooper Swan *Cygnus cygnus*



One site: one pair with three young.

Scotland One site: pair with three young about seven days old on 7th July.

Western Isles One site: adult male displaying over nest of a pair of Mute Swans *C. olor* and even, at times, sitting on their nest; Mute Swans eventually hatched young. Not a breeding record or even a mixed pair, but could easily have been mistakenly reported as such.

This species has not been included in these reports before, but there have been a handful of breeding records this century, the most recent being in the Western Isles in 1947, and, more frequently, cases of mixed Whooper × Mute pairings (see *The Atlas*, page 447).

Black Duck *Anas rubripes*

One female paired with Mallard *A. platyrhynchos* and reared hybrid young.

Scilly One site: female daily from 12th March to mid April, reappeared on 26th June, accompanied by seven ducklings about two weeks old; only five ducklings in mid August, only two (both females) in October and one in December. This is same site as that listed under 'Cornwall' in 1977.

This Nearctic duck is closely related to the Mallard and hybridisation is frequent in North America.

Pintail *Anas acuta*

Ten sites: seven to 23 pairs breeding.

Angus One site: pair seen on 23rd April, 8th June and 29th July, did not nest at site, but could have attempted to breed nearby.

Argyll One site: on 9th July, three females, one with one nearly-flying young, second with about four fledged young and third injury-feigning.

Cambridge One site: pair mating on 26th April.

Cambridge/Norfolk One site: potentially six pairs early in season, but only proof of breeding was single female with one nearly-fledged young in August.

Kirkcudbright One site: pair fledged four young from nine eggs; another female with seven half-grown young on 18th June; further three pairs probably deterred from breeding by floods.

Orkney Five sites: (1) at least three pairs probably bred, but only one proved; (2)(3) single pairs probably bred; (4)(5) single pairs possibly bred.

About average numbers.

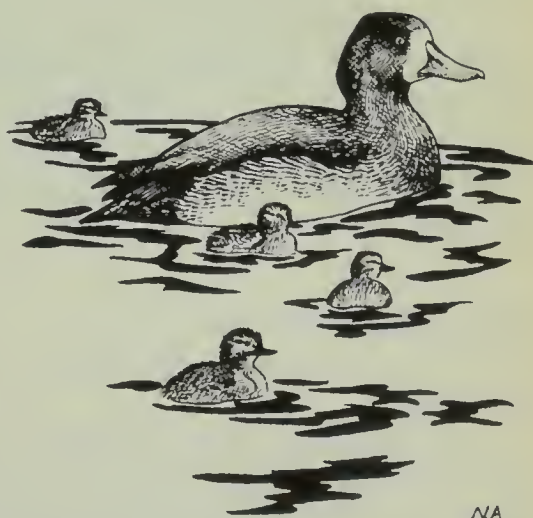
Scaup *Aythya marila*

Two sites: one female with brood and one female present.

North Yorkshire One site: female, perhaps not 100% pure-bred, with male Tufted Duck *A. fuligula* in April-June and alone into July, possibly tried to breed, but nest area flooded in mid May.

Orkney One site: female with seven or eight young in late June.

Most of the few post-1945 breeding records have been in Orkney. The only records in the 1970s have been in Perthshire (three nests at one site in 1970) and in Orkney (female with two young in 1973), although an unmated female laid infertile clutches in Suffolk annually during 1967-71.



Common Scoter *Melanitta nigra*

Nine sites: 16-141 pairs breeding.

Caithness Five sites, with breeding proved at two: (1) female with seven young and three other females present on 15th July; (2) female with six young on 15th July; (3) four males and three females on 15th May; (4) female on 23rd June; (5) two females on 9th July. Some sites not checked; wet, cold summer; regular nesting areas not searched because of danger of chilling of clutches in adverse weather conditions.

Dunbarton/Stirling One site: nine males and seven females on 17th May, female with two ducklings on 12th July, female with one well-grown young on 5th August.

Fermanagh One site: 113 pairs estimated during 1st-2nd June; minimum of 12 broods.

Perth One site: two males and three females displaying in May; adult with brood on 14th July.

Shetland One site: up to four pairs in May-June; probably bred, but no proof.

1977 Fermanagh One site: 121 pairs estimated in late May; minimum of 14 broods.

The possible maximum total was the lowest for at least four years, but fluctuations probably largely reflect differences in the degree of coverage; pairs breeding each year during 1973-77 were 4-133, 10-142, 32-159, 22-159 and 24-156.

Goldeneye *Bucephala clangula*

13 sites: 12-15 females, hatching at least 40 young.

Highland Ten sites, 12-15 females laid over 138 eggs in 13 nests, six broods totalling at least 40 young: (1) three nestboxes occupied, one with 22 eggs (probably two females) failed, second with nine eggs robbed by egg-collector, third with unknown number of eggs also probably robbed by collector; (2) nestbox with nine eggs which failed to hatch; (3) nestbox with 13 eggs not incubated; (4) two nestboxes occupied, one with 17 eggs of which some hatched and young seen nearby, second with 12 eggs which did not hatch; (5) nestbox used, number of eggs not known, but eight young nearby on 5th June; (6) nestbox with ten eggs, five stolen by predator, five remaining eggs failed to hatch; (7) nestbox with 12 eggs, nine young on 31st May of which four survived; (8) nestbox with eight eggs, six young hatched; (9) natural hole in birch *Betula* with ten eggs, nine young on 23rd June; (10) unknown natural site, six young on 8th July.

Isle of Man One site: male on 20th June, no suggestion of breeding.

Midlothian One site: adult pair and an immature from 3rd June to mid July.

Roxburgh One site: female on 23rd June at site where many often remain until late May and display is frequently observed.

1977 Mid Glamorgan/West Glamorgan Two sites: male alternating between two sites from winter to 23rd June.

The number of females nesting in 1978 was about double the total of any previous year. Although at least one and perhaps two clutches were stolen by egg-collectors, the number of broods was also a record. The totals of nesting females (and, in brackets, young seen) were as follows each year during 1970-78: 1 (4), 1 (0), 1 (9), 3 (22), 3 (19), 2-3 (10+), 5 (46), 6-7 (11) and 12-15 (40+).

Honey Buzzard *Pernis apivorus*

At least eight sites, in at least three counties: one to eight or more pairs breeding.

It continues to be impossible to monitor the national status of this species, since even retrospective data are still withheld by a few observers from both the local and the national ornithological conservation bodies as well as from the panel. We believe, however, that the UK population is fairly stable at about eight to 15 (probably ten to 12) pairs.

Red Kite *Milvus milvus*

34 pairs: 20 young reared from 12 successful nests.

County A No pairs, just a single in April.

County B Three sites: (1)-(3) single pairs all failed.

County C 24 sites: (1)-(4) single pairs each reared two young; (5)-(7) single pairs each reared one young; (8)-(21) single pairs failed, mainly due to persistent heavy rain when young were in the nest; (22)-(24) single pairs built nests but did not lay eggs. There were also about 17 other unpaired individuals present in April.

County D Four sites: (1)-(3) single pairs each reared two young; (4) pair failed. Also one unpaired individual present.

County E Two sites: (1) pair reared two young; (2) pair reared one young. Also one or perhaps two unpaired individuals in April.

County F One site: pair failed.

The number of nesting pairs was the highest this century; although the poor summer resulted in only about one-third rearing young, the total fledged was higher than in all recent years except 1975, when 24 young were reared. The numbers of nesting pairs and successful nests (and, in brackets, young reared) were as follows: 26, 10 (14) in 1973; 27, 9 (12) in 1974; 28, 15 (24) in 1975; 28, 14 (18) in 1976; and 33, 12 (17) in 1977.



Marsh Harrier *Circus aeruginosus*

12 sites: 15 males and 16 females breeding, 12 pairs nested successfully, rearing total of 34 young.

Norfolk Seven sites: (1) two pairs reared four and two young; (2) two pairs, one rearing three young, second nest failed; (3)-(5) single pairs each reared three young; (6) pair nested, but all three young died; (7) pair probably bred.

Suffolk Four sites: (1) at Minsmere, male mated to two females, three young reared from one nest, but clutch at other did not hatch, presumed infertile eggs; (2) three pairs reared four, three and one young; (3) pair reared four young; (4) pair reared one young.

West Glamorgan One site: female or immature on 1st and 5th May and 13th June.

1977 West Glamorgan One site: immature male from 4th April to 31st July.

The welcome recent build-up of breeding pairs was maintained, with an equal number of nesting females to that in 1977; but fewer young were reared. During 1973-78, the numbers of nesting females (and, in brackets, young reared) in each year have been as follows: 6 (16), 6 (10), 7 (18), 11 (25), 16 (44) and 16 (34). The 1977-78 level is almost certainly the highest in Britain this century.

Montagu's Harrier *Circus pygargus*

Six sites: one to six pairs breeding.

County D One site: pair spent 'a day or so' in area where nesting has occurred in the past.

County E Four sites: (1) one pair present throughout breeding season, said to have nested and rumoured to have reared three young, but details not submitted to county recorder; (2) male on 30th May; (3) female on 4th June; (4) pair at end of June and early July.

County F One site: pair hatched five young, of which three fledged 'despite massive human interference'.

This elegant raptor remains a British breeding species...just. It will need birdwatchers' restraint to survive, and we appeal for visits to known breeding sites to be limited to official observers watching on behalf of the RSPB, the NCC or the local society.

Goshawk *Accipiter gentilis*

17 or 18 sites: four to 18 pairs, but only three known to have nested successfully, rearing eight young.

County C One site: report of male in display flight, but county editor knows that other data have been withheld.

County D One site: nest and eggs in early April, but robbed; pair then moved nearby and successfully hatched eggs, but young disappeared when small.

County F One site: one, probably female, seen soaring on 10th February.

County K Four sites: (1) pair reared three young; (2) pair present May-June, may have bred; (3) pair present, possibly bred; (4) reports not received, but thought still to be present in area occupied in 1977.

County L Three sites, but no breeding evidence: (1) pair on 24th March, one on 29th March, pair on 18th April, female on 27th August; (2) immature male and adult female on 4th March, female on 15th April, one on 18th May; (3) male on 4th March, female on 2nd April, male and two females on 15th April.

County N One site: pair reared three young.

County Q Three or four sites: pairs (or one or two birds) seen at each, with display reported, but no successful nesting.

County T One site: pair reared two young.

County U One site: pair present, display seen, breeding possible.

County V One site: female seen in June, nest-building reported nearby.

1977 County T One site: pair reared three young.

1977 County W One site: pair reared two young.

It is not easy to follow the changing status of the Goshawk in Britain, since some observers still withhold records. Those submitted, however, show totals during 1973-77 of 6-12, 8-17, 4-31, 11-22 and 4-21 breeding pairs; 1976 was the most successful year, with at least 17 young fledging.

Osprey *Pandion haliaetus*

22 breeding sites: at least 11 pairs nested successfully, rearing a total of 19-20 young.

Inverness Loch Garten: pair, three eggs, three young reared.

Perth Loch of Lowes: first on 24th April, pair in mid May, female disappeared 17th May, new female later in summer, but no eggs laid.

Scotland 20 sites: (1)-(3) single pairs each laid three eggs and reared two young; (4)-(6) single pairs each laid three eggs and reared one young; (7) pair laid three eggs and reared one or two young; (8) pair laid three eggs but three young died when nest destroyed in gales in July; (9) pair laid three eggs but reared no young; (10)-(12) single pairs each reared two young; (13) new pair laid two eggs but young died in gales in July; (14) one or two at nest in April, but no eggs laid; (15) male on 1st April, female from 21st May, nest-building to end of summer, but no eggs laid; (16) late pair built nest, but no eggs laid; (17) eggs laid, but failed; (18) late pair at eyrie, but no eggs laid; (19) eggs laid in very exposed site, but failed; (20) new pair built new eyrie in April, but no eggs laid. Summering individuals present at an estimated further 12-15 sites.



The number of pairs present and the number laying eggs were both the highest this century, but the season was again late, with a cold spring. Three pairs failed during incubation and two nests (with five young) were destroyed in July gales.

Hobby *Falco subbuteo*

140 sites: 68-152 pairs breeding, rearing at least 95 young.

Avon Three sites, but no proved breeding: (1) singles regularly in June-August; (2) singles on 25th May, 28th June and 24th September; (3) one on 15th July.

Bedford 14 sites: (1) pair reared two young; (2)-(14) sightings during 3rd May to 23rd September, 'a remarkable increase on previous years'.

Berkshire Four sites: (1) pair reared at least one young; (2) adult seen on five occasions during 9th July to 12th September; (3) singles seen during 18th-28th June and 7th-9th July; (4) singles on 22nd July and 3rd August.

Buckingham One site: pair reared two young.

Cambridge Two sites: (1) pair with two flying young in August; (2) pair displaying.

Devon The only information supplied to us was: 'A good breeding season.'

Dorset The only information supplied to us was: '12 pairs are known to have raised 15 young, and one nest failed.'

Gloucester Three sites: (1) pair reared two young; (2)(3) single pairs possibly bred. Recorder comments: 'impression is that this species is more numerous than the records suggest.'

Hampshire 13 sites, seven to 24 pairs breeding: (1) at least 12 pairs, four confirmed breeding; (2)(3) single pairs each reared two young; (4) pair on three dates, immature in August; (5) pair for two weeks in late May; (6) pair through breeding season, 'no young seen, but probably bred'; (7)-(13) pairs or singles hunting or carrying food on two or more dates. 'In view of the many sites for which records were not received and the presumed under-recording in the New Forest, the county breeding population may well be of the order of 40-50 pairs.'

Huntingdon One site: adults and more than one flying young seen on several occasions in August-September.

Kent Three sites: (1) pair with flying young; (2) pair in June-July; (3) singly on three dates in June-July. Also: 'a good number of single reports at various sites during June-July, but nothing more.'

Leicester Three sites: (1) pair reared at least two young, which left nest on 13th August; (2) pair reared three or four young; (3) pair reared one young.

Northampton One site: pair reared two young, still in nest on 25th August, nest empty 29th August.

Nottingham Three sites: (1)(2) pairs in territory; (3) 'crop of sightings could have involved an adult pair and independent young'.

Oxford Six sites: (1)(2) single pairs each reared two young; (3) pair nested, details not supplied to county recorder; (4) 'seen often in June'; (5) 'seen several times in June and July'; (6) present, but details not supplied to county recorder.

Somerset 21-22 sites: (1) pair reared two young; (2) pair reared at least three young; (3) pair carrying food regularly in July-August; (4) pair seen frequently from 9th May to 22nd July; (5) pair (sometimes only a single) during 10th-25th May and on 16th June, displaying on 25th May; (6) adult and, later, juveniles during 10th June to 4th September; (7) pair on 10th June; (8) two on 21st May; (9) pair displaying on 28th May; (10) two pairs (up to five adults) during 22nd May to 13th July; (11)-(21) singles, or sometimes two together, during June-August in possible breeding areas; (22) pair on 4th June, perhaps same as site 4.

Stafford 'No reports of breeding, but more casual sightings than ever before, particularly in spring' (cf. Bedford, Kent, Worcester).

Suffolk One site: 'one pair bred', but details not supplied to county recorder.

Surrey Ten sites: (1) pair reared three young; (2) pair reared two young; (3) pair reared at least one young; (4)-(7) single pairs each reared one young; (8) two pairs, one rearing one young, clutch of second pair disappeared; (9) three pairs, one probably rearing two young, second probably rearing one young, no evidence of breeding by third; (10) pair, but no evidence of breeding.

Warwick Eight sites: (1) 'one pair nested'; (2) three noisy recently-fledged juveniles; (3) 'bred as in many previous years'; (4) pair soaring over regular site on 22nd May; (5) adults in June, juvenile in September and other sightings nearby; (6)-(8) many individual sightings in August-September where breeding proved or suspected in previous years. Lack of detail supplied to county recorder makes success difficult to assess; we have assumed that at least one young was reared at site 1 and at site 3.

West Sussex Five sites: (1) pair reared two young; (2) pair reared at least one young; (3)(4) single pairs; (5) 'present'. Full details not supplied to us.

Wiltshire Eight sites: (1) pair reared at least two young; (2) pair with three flying young; (3)-(6) single pairs probably bred; (7)(8) single pairs possibly bred. No other details supplied to us.

Worcester One site: pair reared three young, also a third adult reported. Also: 'many more reports of single birds in May, June, August and September this year, involving widespread localities.'

County E 16 sites: (1)-(3) single pairs each reared three young; (4)-(8) single pairs each reared two young; (9) pair reared one young; (10) pair lost first clutch, repeated, small young in nest in August, outcome unknown; (11) pair nested, outcome unknown; (12)(13) single pairs reported; (14)(15) single pairs possibly bred; (16) one of a pair shot before nesting started. 'In spite of bad summer, Hobbies have done remarkably well.'

1976 Northampton One site: individuals present 'at harvest-time' suggests probable breeding at site where breeding was confirmed in 1978.

1977 Hampshire Additional sites: (5) pair reared three young; (6) pair reared one young.

1977 Northampton One site: one on 24th May at site where breeding probable in 1976 and confirmed in 1978.

1977 Nottingham Correction: records from site 1 and site 2 (*Brit. Birds* 72: 371) related to the same pair at the same locality.

It was clearly another very good year for Hobbies. The minimum and maximum numbers of pairs breeding and the number of young reared were all by far the highest since these reports started. The totals would clearly have been even more encouraging if the Devon figures—not supplied to us since 1974—had been available. We hope that the decision to withhold information for this key county will soon be reconsidered in the light of the very full details received from most other areas. The adjusted annual totals of pairs breeding (with, in brackets, number of young reared) during 1973-77 were: 22-60 (24), 43-91 (49), 37-132 (40), 58-140 (69) and 50-117 (78).

Spotted Crake *Porzana porzana*

Six sites: singing males at five.

Bedford One site: male singing during 10th-12th June.

Dunbarton One site: one in suitable habitat on 17th May, but no singing heard.

Dyfed One site: male singing from late April to 18th May.

Inverness One site: male singing on 8th May.

Western Isles One site: male singing for about a week in early June.

County A One site: two males singing and, later, sight records: breeding 'possible, if not probable'.

None has been confirmed breeding in the UK since these reports started in 1973.

Avocet *Recurvirostra avosetta*

Four sites: successful nesting at three, 145 pairs rearing 92 young.

Norfolk Two sites: (1) five pairs reared a total of 17 young; (2) pair mating, but did not breed.

Suffolk Two sites: (1) at Minsmere, 47 pairs reared a total of 19 young; (2) at Havergate Island, 93 pairs reared a total of 56 young.

During 1973-77, the number of breeding pairs varied from 125 to 158 (mean 146) and the number of young reared varied from 14 to 142 (mean 81); 1978 was, therefore, about average in both respects.

Stone-curlew *Burhinus oediconemus*

Over 29 sites: 28 to at least 41 pairs breeding.

Berkshire Three sites: (1) none located in visits from May onwards until two or more heard in August, but possibly bred nearby; (2) farmer reported that pair bred; (3) heard in April, but area not revisited.

Cambridge Five sites: (1) pair, calling heard, chicks seen; (2) pair, two chicks hatched on 28th June; (3)-(5) single pairs.

Dorset Two sites: (1) pair bred; (2) pair probably bred. Other possible areas not adequately covered.

Essex Three sites: (1)(2) single pairs with young; (3) pair probably bred.

Hampshire One site: nine breeding pairs.

Norfolk 'Present in usual areas, but no counts available.'

Oxford Two sites: (1) pair from April to late May; (2) pair in late May and June. Other likely areas not regularly visited.

Suffolk Breeding confirmed for six pairs in Breckland and four pairs in coastal strip.

West Sussex One site: two birds present from 20th April to 9th July.

Wiltshire Six sites: (1)-(4) single pairs confirmed breeding; (5)(6) single pairs possibly bred.

As in 1977, when the total was three to 26 pairs breeding, the calculated figures are completely unrepresentative for two reasons. First, the nocturnal habits of this species make censuses difficult and all counts are probably underestimates (perhaps gross underestimates). Secondly, there has been no census within the species' main UK breeding area of Norfolk; the last estimate there was in 1976, when 30 pairs were reported for Breckland alone. The 1968-72 British population was estimated in the *Atlas* to be probably not less than 300 pairs and perhaps over 500 pairs. Our knowledge is no better now than it was then. Concerted, co-ordinated all-night censuses by experts, together with liaison with landowners, are necessary to improve it.

Dotterel *Charadrius morinellus*

At least 15 pairs confirmed breeding, but data very incomplete.

Angus Two sites: (1)(2) total of four pairs bred, with 'average breeding success'.

Cumbria Two sites: (1) nest with one egg on 24th May; three eggs on 4th June, found destroyed by stock 29th June; (2) pair with single eight- to ten-day-old chick on 3rd July.

Grampian 'No change in number of pairs, but worst breeding season since at least 1967 (when intensive study began), due to snowstorm in July. A few late young from second clutches.'

Inverness/Banff/Aberdeen '19 (one juvenile) and pair with brood of three small young on 29th July; 42 (six small young and five juveniles) on 10th August. Suggests poor early season but better for late broods.'

County B One site: one on 24th April, nine on 26th April and five on 7th May, near site of 1975 attempted breeding (*Brit. Birds* 70: 10).

County E One site: up to 18 during 7th-19th May where breeding proved in past.

County G One site: unconfirmed report of adult in June, then adult with barely fledged juvenile on 31st July, adult and flying juvenile, presumably same two, nearby on 6th August.

County H Two sites: (1) one on 10th May, male with four young 4 km away on 26th June; (2) on 13th June, three males with newly hatched chicks, nest with three eggs and male which it was considered 'almost certainly had a nest'.

1977 County B One site: one on 24th May, but no subsequent search for nest.

The information supplied from the main areas is so incomplete that totals cannot be calculated. In any case, many suitable sites are not visited every year. D. Nethersole-Thompson (1973, *The Dotterel*) estimated 56-74 pairs; the Scottish population is probably still at approximately that level.

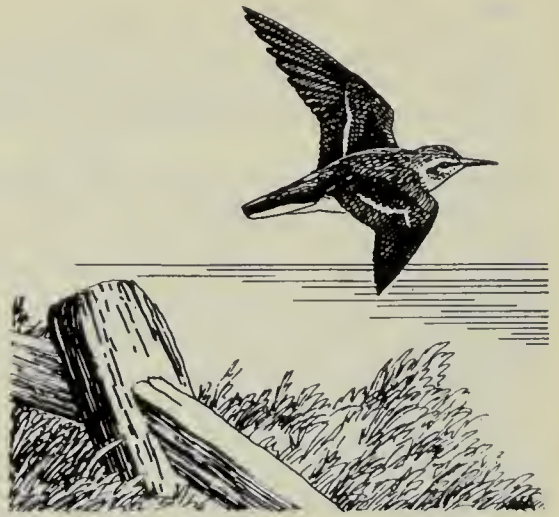
Temminck's Stint *Calidris temminckii*

Three sites: ten individuals, with at least two attempting to breed.

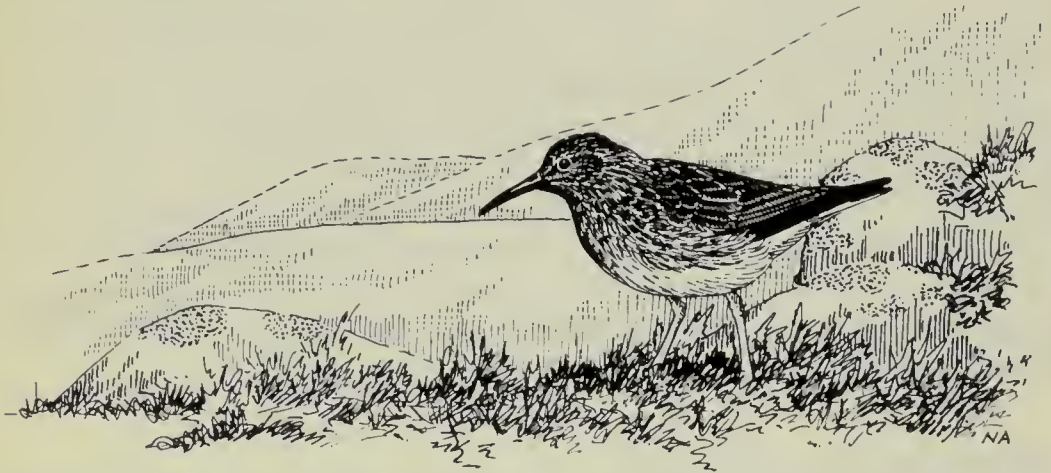
County A Two sites: (1) at least one bird present, four eggs on 4th June, but nest flooded, repeat clutch of four on 27th June, but eggs failed to hatch (cold in nest on 2nd August), perhaps only one unmated female present; (2) one summer sighting.

County B One site: first on 20th May, up to eight adults (on 31st May) and much display, still seven (three displaying) on 22nd June; bred, but success not known.

The main area continues to hold an active colony.



Purple Sandpiper *Calidris maritima*



One site: one pair hatched three young of which at least one fledged.

Scotland One site: pair seen 3rd, 20th and 26th June, adult performing rodent-runs and three downy chicks found on 8th July, adult and one flying young on 29th July.

These observations constitute the first breeding record of this Arctic wader in the UK. Breeding numbers have greatly declined in the Faeroe Islands (Dorete Bloch *in litt.*); Scottish breeding was, however, not unexpected in the light of the other recent colonisations by Scandinavian species.

Ruff *Philomachus pugnax*

Three sites: no confirmed breeding.

Cambridge One site: female at suitable breeding site on 20th May.

Cambridge/Norfolk One site: usual leks, but area then flooded and breeding considered highly unlikely.

Lancashire One site: up to four males and three females at lek from early May to mid June, but no proof of breeding.

A disappointing year.

Jack Snipe *Lymnocyptes minimus*

One site: early autumn records.

County A One site: single on 4th August and 4th September.

1975 County A One site: two displaying over sedgy meadow on 21st May.

1977 County A One site: singly during 13th-23rd August.

This species has not appeared before in these reports, and has never been proved to breed in the UK, but is a possible colonist. These late spring and early autumn records in 1975, 1977 and 1978 gain significance by all relating to a single site.

Black-tailed Godwit *Limosa limosa*

13 sites: 50-68 pairs breeding.

Cambridge Two sites: (1) pair with two two- to four-day-old young on 9th May; (2) pair on 14th and 21st May, breeding suspected.

Cambridge/Norfolk One site: minimum of 40 pairs bred, but success not known; pairs much scattered and reneating after floods.

Norfolk Three sites: (1) five pairs reared young; (2) two pairs, of which one reared four young; (3) pair prospecting.

Shetland One site: pair from 28th April to end of June, display and agitation observed, but breeding success not known. 'This site has become too well known and disturbance by birdwatchers may have affected successful breeding.'

Somerset One site: three pairs probably bred (behaviour on 15th June strongly pointed to three pairs with young, though none seen) and fourth unsuccessful.

Suffolk Three sites: (1) pair with one chick and two other possible pairs; (2)(3) single pairs possibly bred.

County F One site: pair with chicks.

County G One site: certainly one, probably four and possibly seven pairs bred: three pairs and four males on 20th May; three pairs, two unpaired birds and nest with four eggs on 28th May; four pairs with young suspected on 31st May.

The number away from the main area (10-28 pairs) was the highest on record, but this species remains very dependent on the vagaries of the weather and consequent water-levels, and very vulnerable to disturbance. We hope that observers will read the Shetland comment and refrain from visiting breeding sites or be very circumspect when doing so.

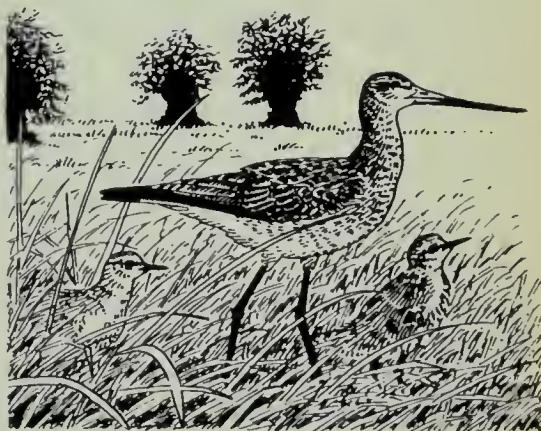
Wood Sandpiper *Tringa glareola*

Seven sites: four to ten pairs breeding.

Grampian Two sites: (1)(2) singles in May.

Inverness Two sites: (1) two or three adults, two males singing from 12th May, nest with four eggs on 13th June, hatched successfully and one to three young seen during 14th-16th June, one adult still song-fighting on 1st July; (2) one pair on 2nd-3rd June.

Ross Three sites: (1) two or three pairs on 27th May, two pairs agitated on 24th June and clearly with young; (2) agitated adult



with young on 13th June; (3) pair on 30th May.

1973 Inverness One site: one on 19th June.

The highest ever number of sites and, probably, the most pairs breeding. The previous peak year was the last year of the *Atlas* project, when fieldwork was at a maximum: 5-8 pairs breeding in 1972; since then, annual totals have been 0-3, 1-4, 2-6, 1-3, 2-5 and, now, 4-10.

Red-necked Phalarope *Phalaropus lobatus*

Ten sites: 22-36 pairs breeding.

Shetland Three sites: (1)-(3) total of 19-24 pairs, apparently good hatching, but very poor fledging success and possibly as few as four juveniles reared: frequent northerly gales, almost daily drizzle and mist making conditions very cold and very wet at critical periods.

Western Isles Four sites: (1) two females and one male early in season, one male and one female on 16th June, females on 21st June; (2) two males and four females, 'males incubating but nests not searched for'; (3) pair chasing each other on 23rd June; (4) pair early in season, female on 9th June. These details are probably very incomplete.

County A One site: pair and nest with two eggs on 23rd June, male towered and returned to pool on 27th July; known egg-collector seen in vicinity.

County B One site on mainland Scotland: at same site as in 1977, female on 26th May, pair from 31st May, possibly third adult on 2nd July, probably bred.

County C One site: two involved in close-pursuit chase on 7th July, female feeding in area on 9th (perhaps male on eggs or with small chicks nearby?).

The numbers of sites and of pairs are both the highest recorded in these reports. The return to the Scottish mainland site in County B is very pleasing, but the poor breeding success in Shetland bodes ill for the future.

Mediterranean Gull *Larus melanocephalus*

One site: no breeding at a former site.

Hampshire One site: single adults on 12th March and 23rd April, and a hybrid Mediterranean × Black-headed Gull *L. ridibundus* on 11th June.

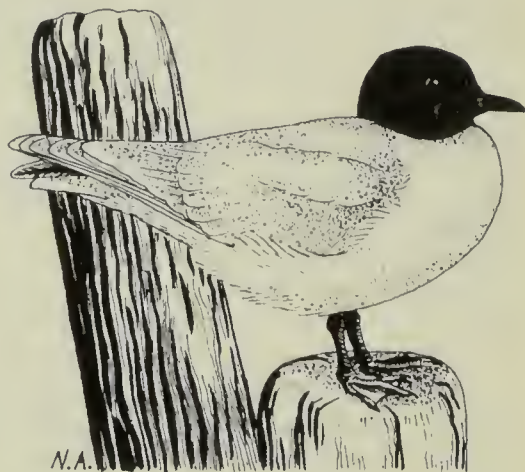
Nesting by pure pairs has occurred only in 1968, 1976 and 1977 (*Brit. Birds* 63: 67-79; 65: 185-186; 71: 22; 72: 375).

Little Gull *Larus minutus*

Two sites: two pairs nested, but no young were hatched.

Norfolk One site: pair (and seven immatures) in late May, adults displaying, nesting in early June, but clutch of three eggs found on 16th June failed to hatch; one adult lingered until 25th July.

North Yorkshire One site: at Fairburn Ings (RSPB reserve), pair took up residence in colony of Black-headed Gulls *L. ridibundus* in late May/early June, display, nest-building and incubation observed, then one adult found injured (possible vandalism), other adult deserted and nest destroyed by predator, possibly Carrion Crows *Corvus corone*.



These are the second and third occasions on which pairs of Little Gulls are known to have laid eggs in the UK, the previous record being on the Ouse Washes in Cambridgeshire/Norfolk in 1975 (*Brit. Birds* 70: 331-332).

Glaucous Gull *Larus hyperboreus*

One site: for fourth successive year, one bred with a Herring Gull *L. argentatus*.

Shetland One site: same adult as during 1975-77 paired with Herring Gull and reared at least one young.

Black Tern *Chlidonias niger*

One site: one pair nested.

Nottingham One site: pair nested, eggs stolen by egg-collector and stones substituted.

The only accepted breeding records in Britain since 1885 were in 1966, 1969, 1970 and 1975; pairs also nested in Ireland in 1967 and 1975.

Snowy Owl *Nyctea scandiaca*

One site: no breeding.

Shetland One site: on Fetlar, up to two females present, but no males.

After breeding for nine consecutive years during 1967-75 and rearing 21 young, Snowy Owls have now not bred in the UK for three years.

Hoopoe *Upupa epops*

Four sites: 0-4 pairs breeding.

East Sussex/West Sussex Three sites: (1)-(3) three individuals at widely separated localities, each on single dates in June.

Huntingdon One site: one seen on many occasions between 14th June and 28th July, often collecting food and carrying it into a wood; no nest-hole found nor any second individual seen, but considered to have been almost certainly breeding.

Four pairs bred in 1977 but were the first since 1971; the meagre showing in 1978 was in fact more than in an average year.

Wryneck *Jynx torquilla*

21 sites: three to 21 pairs breeding.

Argyll One site: two seen and heard on 21st-22nd May.

Grampian Two sites: (1) one on 8th May; (2) one on 6th June.

Inverness 13 sites: (1) pair feeding young on 30th June; (2) one singing on 4th June; (3) pair feeding young in nestbox during 5th-13th July; (4) pair nested in nestbox, probably successfully; (5) one singing during 6th-27th June; (6) two singing during 19th May to 21st June; (7) at least one at usual site, probably nested; (8) one singing on 24th-25th May; (9) one singing on 30th May; (10)-(12) singles singing on 25th May; (13) pair, singing, on 3rd July.

Ross Two sites: (1) one singing during 2nd-26th May; (2) two seen and heard on 2nd June.

Suffolk Two sites: (1) one singing for one day in mid June; (2) one singing for five days in mid June.

Surrey One site: apparently unmated male sang from 28th May to 29th June.

Cessation of singing early in season can be indicative of successful pairing and starting of nesting, or of the departure of a transient migrant. Once breeding starts, Wrynecks can be very easily overlooked. It is, therefore, difficult to assess status, but the calculated totals of pairs breeding during 1973-78 show a generally encouraging trend: 1-2, 1-5, 3-10, 1-7, 7-19 and 3-21.

Fieldfare *Turdus pilaris*

Two sites: no proof of breeding.

Kent One site: adult on 14th August and immature on 14th September.

Stafford 'No evidence of breeding in the usual area.'

Suffolk One site: one during June.

The two-pronged colonisation of the UK, from Scandinavia and from the Low Countries, came to an unexpected halt in 1978. Totals of pairs breeding during 1973-78 have been: 2-3, 3-6, 1-7, 3-9, 4-6 and, now, 0-2.

Redwing *Turdus iliacus*

Seven sites: only one confirmed breeding record.

Inverness Six sites: (1) adult and two juveniles during 23rd-26th July; (2) four singing males on 11th June; (3)-(5) single singing males in early May, on 22nd May and on 8th June, respectively; (6) singing male during 21st-26th May, two on one day.

Suffolk One site: one on several days in July.

1977 Ross One site: adult with three fledged young.

In 1972, the last year of the *Atlas* project, 12-42 pairs were discovered and the breeding population was estimated to be as high as perhaps 300 pairs. The decline from that peak has been striking: totals of pairs breeding during 1973-77 were 4-11, 3-26, 10-34, 2-7, 2-12 and, now, 1-11.

Cetti's Warbler *Cettia cetti*

46 sites: 30-172 pairs breeding.

Cornwall One site: pair carrying food to inaccessible nest-site. First proved breeding in county.

Devon Eight sites, but breeding possible at only three: (1) up to eight singing to end of April, six remained during June, up to 16 in late October, five juveniles trapped; (2) heard and seen in every month; (3) one singing during June; (4) one singing until mid May and again in October, two on 28th October; (5) two trapped in July and one in October, but none noted in May-June; (6)(7) singles in April; (8) one heard and seen in November.

Dorset About 12 sites: (1) six pairs all successfully reared young; (2)-(12) pairs or singing males.

East Sussex One site: singing male in July at a former breeding site.

Hampshire Five sites: (1) two singing males; (2) pair, breeding probable; (3) one singing male; (4)(5) single singing males in May and June, respectively.

Hertford One site: pair, nest with clutch of four, but eggs infertile, male still singing. First proved breeding in county.

Kent Seven sites, at least 107 singing males, most if not all mated, at least nine pairs proved to breed: (1) 70 males, eight pairs known to have bred successfully; (2) 16 males, at least one pair bred successfully; (3) six males; (4) area not censused, at least five males; (5) five males; (6) three males; (7) two males.

Norfolk Three sites: (1)-(3) total of 23 singing males, including nine pairs proved breeding at one site.

Suffolk Five sites: (1) pair bred, two young seen; (2) pair bred successfully; (3) two individuals during summer, one singing from 'March to June, and breeding strongly suspected'; (4) singing in breeding season, possibly bred; (5) singing male in May and June.

Surrey One site: singing male from 7th May to 24th July. The first county record.

West Sussex One site: singing male in June.

Worcester One site: singing male all summer.

1977 Perth The record noted last year (*Brit. Birds* 72: 337) was not accepted for inclusion in the Scottish Bird Report and should be deleted.

1977 West Glamorgan One site: immature female trapped on 9th July.

A further extension, to 39 sites away from the stronghold county, Kent; and the highest ever number of pairs breeding (the 1973-77 totals were 1-14, 5-16, 8-75, 8-80 and 13-153).

Savi's Warbler *Locustella luscinioides*

14 sites: four to 26 pairs breeding.

Devon Two sites: (1) three singing during April-July, breeding 'thought to be highly probable'; (2) one singing during April-May.

Dorset Two sites: (1) pair probably bred; (2) pair possibly bred.

Kent One site: seven singing males from late April, at least five paired, one pair watched nest-building, two pairs seen feeding young.

Norfolk Three sites: (1)(2) singles singing regularly; (3) one singing during 2nd-11th May.

Nottingham One site: one singing on 15th July.

Suffolk Two sites: (1) at Minsmere, two singing males and 'it seems probable that two pairs bred or attempted to breed'; (2) pair almost certainly bred, juvenile trapped on 20th August.

Warwick One site: one singing during 3rd-21st May.

County B One site: male on at least 9th and 10th May.

County C One site: two pairs successfully, third pair probably bred, fourth singing male present.

Another good year. Totals of pairs breeding during 1973-77 were 0-13, 1-8, 1-3, 0-9 and 3-26.

Marsh Warbler *Acrocephalus palustris*

16 sites: 'no change' at main site, four to 15 pairs breeding elsewhere.

Gloucester One site: male singing on 14th June.

Hertford One site: male singing during 25th May to 4th June.

Kent Two sites: (1) male singing from 3rd June to early July; (2) male singing on 3rd June.

West Sussex One site: pair reared at least one young.

Worcester Six sites: (1) in main area, 'no change in status' and 'breeding season was quite good'; (2) 'pair bred'; (3) pair feeding young; (4) male singing during 17th-23rd June; (5) one singing during 9th-11th June; (6) one singing on 14th June.

County A Two sites: (1)(2) single singing males present.

County B Three sites: (1)-(3) 'nest-building at one site and song at others'.

Reports from the main Worcestershire site have noted 40-70 pairs in 1973, 1974 and 1975, 50-60 pairs in 1977 and no estimates in 1976 or 1978. Outside this stronghold, annual totals have been 3-13 pairs breeding in five counties in 1973, 0-7 in two counties in 1974, 0-5 in two counties in 1975, 0-5 again, but in three counties, in 1976, and 2-11 in six counties in 1977. The total of 4-15 pairs in seven counties in 1978 is, therefore, a post-*Atlas* record, continuing the welcome upward trend shown in 1977.



Great Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus arundinaceus*

One site: one singing male.

Norfolk One site: male singing during 23rd May to 10th June.

When vagrant male Great Reed Warblers turn up in the UK in spring, they often sing for the duration of their stays; indeed, those that do not sing are unlikely to be discovered. Breeding here has been expected for some years and the eight individuals recorded during May-July 1978 (*Brit. Birds* 72: 536-537) was the highest spring-summer total ever. The long stay of the 1978 Norfolk individual was exceeded by one in Lincolnshire/south Humberside in 1976 (*Brit. Birds* 71: 27).

Dartford Warbler *Sylvia undata*

At least 71 and probably about 118 pairs in New Forest; 25 sites outside New Forest: 35-88 pairs breeding.

Devon One site: three singing males in early spring, one pair reared two broods.

Dorset Eight sites: (1) about ten pairs; (2) five pairs bred successfully, at least two rearing second broods, also two additional singing males (there were 20 pairs at this site in 1977); (3)-(8) single pairs.

Hampshire Seven sites, 71 pairs located in incomplete census of New Forest, 12-24 pairs breeding elsewhere: (1) in New Forest, 71 territories located in 60% of suitable habitat, suggesting a total of about 118 territories, compared with 250 in the last full census in 1974; in 11 blocks of heathland for which results are directly comparable, there were 140 territories in 1974 and 55 in 1978; (2)(3) three pairs bred successfully at each site; (4) 14 pairs or singing males, three pairs proved breeding; (5) two pairs proved breeding; (6) pair proved breeding; (7) singing male.

Surrey Seven sites, with 'some success' at each, total of possibly 29-35 pairs, of which 12 pairs proved and further 12 pairs probably bred: (1) ten to 12 pairs; (2) seven pairs; (3)(4) total of six to eight pairs; (5)(6) total of four to six pairs; (7) two pairs.

West Sussex One site: pair reared unknown number of young.

County A Two sites: (1) pair reared two broods, totalling five young; (2) pair throughout summer, carrying food in May and in July.

1977 Hampshire Revised details from one site: (4) three pairs bred successfully.

Assuming that the New Forest territories all represented breeding pairs and that the censusers' extrapolation is legitimate, the 1978 total was 104-206 breeding pairs. This compares with estimates of about 560 pairs in 1974 and 1975, perhaps over 350 pairs in 1976, and almost certainly over 300 and possibly over 400 pairs in 1977. Thus, the UK population has apparently halved, probably as a result of a combination of heath-fires, cold weather in February 1978 and—the most serious long-term threats—habitat loss and fragmentation.

Firecrest *Regulus ignicapillus*

Four sites: the only confirmed breeding involved a mixed pairing with female Goldcrest *R. regulus*.

Buckingham One site: male mated with female Goldcrest and reared two hybrid young.

Gwent One site: male singing on 11th May near site where nest-building recorded in 1977.

Hampshire None reported from the traditional New Forest sites.

Kent One site: male singing on 23rd May and one seen on 2nd June at site where breeding confirmed in 1975.

Merseyside One site: pair, with male singing, on 17th April.

It is disappointing that the main Buckinghamshire site—where there were totals of 11, 24, 46, 11 and 14 singing males during 1973-77—was almost untenanted in 1978. Away from that area, annual totals of pairs breeding have been 2-7, 0-9, 3-75, 3-16 and 2-17 during 1973-77, so the 0-3 pairs in 1978 is the lowest level since these reports started. (The number in the UK in 1975 has been misquoted in the past two reports: the correct total is 4-121 pairs breeding.)

Golden Oriole *Oriolus oriolus*

13 sites: seven to 27 pairs breeding.

Durham One site: male singing on 24th June. Also unconfirmed report of pair present from May to July at a second site.

Essex Three sites: (1) pair nested and hatched young, but probably none fledged; (2) pair during summer; (3) male in June.

Gwent One site: on 27th May, song heard and then female (or male with female-type plumage) seen.

Kent Five sites: (1) pair from 27th May to 11th July; (2) two males during 20th-27th May, pair from 26th May to 11th June; (3) male on 1st June, two pairs on 11th June, pair on 29th June; (5) one to three males in June, pair in July.

Suffolk Two sites: (1) at least six, and possibly as many as ten, pairs bred; (2) one on several dates in June.

Tyne & Wear One site: one singing and seen on 30th May.

West Glamorgan One site: male singing on 18th and 24th June.

1976 West Glamorgan One site: male on 25th May.

1977 South Glamorgan One site: male on 20th June.

This was the third successive good year for Golden Orioles. The total in 1978 was the highest on record, exceeding the 1976 and 1977 estimates of 6-22 and 5-20 pairs breeding.

Red-backed Shrike *Lanius collurio*

35 sites: 13-37 pairs breeding.

Bedford One site: male on 10th-11th June.

Hampshire Two sites: (1) two pairs, one rearing five young and second rearing three young; (2) female on 10th June.

Kincardine One site: female on more than one occasion in late June and larder found.

Lincoln/south Humberside One site: pair, found displaying on 20th May, reared five young.

Norfolk Seven or eight sites: (1) two pairs nested but reared no young; (2)(3) single pairs reared no young; (4) pair reared two young; (5)-(7) single pairs; (8) pair reared two young (perhaps same pair as site 5).

Nottingham One site: pair in early May, a female 'for a time, presumed on passage'.

Suffolk 15 sites: (1)-(14) 14 single pairs probably bred in coastal strip; (15) one pair probably bred in Breckland.

Wiltshire One site: male, at locality near that where a pair bred in 1977.

County A Three sites: (1) male on 15th-22nd June; (2) singing male on 30th May; (3) male on 30th June.

County E One site: pair bred successfully.

County F Two sites: (1) pair reared three young; (2) male during 16th-23rd June.

1977 Wiltshire One site: pair from late June into July, nest found, but three eggs disappeared before hatching.

Totals of breeding pairs during 1973/77 were 27-34, 30-52, 51-54, 3-25 and 48-64. Although the calculated number of pairs breeding in 1978 was below the average of the previous five years, some comfort may be gained from the continuing wide spread of reports, from 11 counties, as in 1977; counties A and F are both in Scotland. More than one county recorder expressed the view that there may be more breeding pairs present than are listed here.

Brambling *Fringilla montifringilla*

One site: probable hybridisation with Chaffinch *F. coelebs*.

Hampshire One site: one male on 17th and 18th July, on latter date in close association with female Chaffinch and three unusual juvenile finches considered perhaps to be hybrids.

There was a similar instance in Inverness-shire during 1968-72 (see *The Atlas*).

Serin *Serinus serinus*

Four sites: one to four pairs breeding.

Devon Three sites: (1) pair, present from 8th May to 1st October, reared two broods, totalling five to seven young; (2) pair on 11th May; (3) male singing in June.

Worcester One site: two, presumed to be pair, the male in song, on 17th-18th June.

The third breeding record in the UK comes at last, nine years and 11 years after the first two, which, at the time, were expected to be precursors of almost instant widespread colonisation from the Continent (see *Brit. Birds* 61: 87-88; 64: 213-223).

Lapland Bunting *Calcarius lapponicus*

Three sites: two to six pairs breeding.

Scotland Three sites: (1) three pairs, at least one female sitting on five eggs on 28th June, young seen later; (2) pair built nest, but female did not lay, second male nearby; (3) one or more adults present.

After the first confirmed nesting in the UK in the previous year (*Brit. Birds* 72: 53-59), breeding of two pairs was confirmed in 1978.

Snow Bunting *Plectrophenax nivalis*

Several pairs bred.

Grampian Information incomplete: 'three males and three females present, breeding production from first broods very poor due to snowstorm in early July, better from second broods.'

County C Three sites: (1) five males and six females, 'poor first broods due to snow, but better later broods'; (2) two or three pairs, one nest found; (3) pair.

County D One site: two males chasing and singing, and one female, on 9th July.

The lack of detail supplied and likelihood of overlap between reports from different sources make it difficult to assess numbers, but the total was almost certainly within the range 2-15 and probably within the range 3-10 pairs breeding.

Rare Breeding Birds Panel, Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3NJ

Obituary

David Armitage Bannerman OBE, MA, ScD, Hon.LLD, FRSE (1886-1979)

David Bannerman, who died on 6th April in his 93rd year, was one of the most distinguished ornithologists of his time. His interest in natural history was already strong at the age of eight and, as a small boy, he declared his ambition to make ornithology his lifework. In this he richly succeeded.

After Wellington College and Cambridge University, where he had graduated BA (Hons.), he became a trainee, under Ogilvie Grant, at the British Museum (Natural History) in 1910. He was, however, determined to work in the field—and abroad as much as possible—and between 1908 and 1913 he carried out an extensive zoological survey of the Canary Islands, making six visits in that period. His first wife, whom he married in 1911, was a daughter of T. P. Morgan of Las Palmas. Before the 1914-18 war, he had also made expeditions to Africa, South America and the West Indies. During that war, he was at first an ambulance driver, having failed the medical for combat duties on account of partial deafness following child-



3. David Armitage Bannerman, OBE, MA, ScD, Hon. LLD, FRSE (1886-1979), with his wife Jane (*Portsmouth and Sunderland Newspapers Ltd*)

hood measles; later, he was on the staff at the HQ of the British Red Cross Society. In 1919, he turned down the chance of taking charge of the Bird Room at South Kensington, preferring to become a supernumerary member of the museum staff at 2/6d an hour. He said that he had tasted too much freedom to be tied down to the conventional life of a London civil servant.

Between the wars, he travelled extensively, mainly on British Museum expeditions, collecting and reporting on the birds of Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Tunisia, the Ivory Coast and other African countries. He also took a prominent part in BOU affairs and was assistant editor of *The Ibis* for ten years. By the age of 40 he had published about 100 scientific papers.

His first magnum opus was *The Birds of Tropical West Africa* (1930-51). In this, he was able to indulge his love of coloured plates, recruiting some of the leading bird artists of the time. He had a special liking for pictures of colourful, or 'shiny', birds, to use his own word. For many of these, he chose the work of George Lodge, with whom he had been friendly for many years. It was during the 1939-45 war, in February 1942, that he and Lodge discussed and planned the book which was to become *The Birds of the British Isles* (1953-63). Its 12 volumes were a marvellous feat of sustained application: erudite, expansive but thoroughly enjoyable to read. He was a peerless compiler, greatly enhancing the text with contributions from specialists, many of whom were his personal friends. Field Marshal Lord Alanbrooke was one who took a great interest in the progress of the book

and wrote the foreword to the first volume. A number of Lodge's plates were in fact painted years before and were selected by David Bannerman from folios in the artist's studio.

In 1952, he retired from the museum. With his second wife, Jane (W. Mary Bannerman), he settled in the Stewartry of Kirkcudbright. For some years, the Bannermans farmed Boreland of Southwick, overlooking the Solway Firth. They regularly travelled abroad for part of the winter, setting the scene and gathering material for further sumptuous books. Well before the marathon on British birds had been celebrated by the publishers (Oliver & Boyd), with a great gathering at a dinner in Edinburgh, *The Birds of Cyprus* had appeared, in 1958. When at home, the Bannermans were often out birdwatching in the Galloway countryside, and I recall converging with them on a pair of Dotterels, which had alighted one April day on the fairway of Southernness Golf-course.

Four handsome volumes, *The Birds of the Atlantic Islands*, were published between 1963 and 1968, the last two with his wife as joint author. In Volume 4, on the Cape Verde Islands, her vivid and racy contribution is a pleasing feature. On a field trip to the Cape Verde Islands, David Bannerman reassured himself—at the age of 80—that his sight was not too bad by 'a right and left' at the 'enormous red cockroaches shaped like torpedoes' in his bedroom. In Volume 1, there is a photograph of him in 1909, on horseback with collecting gun across his knees, looking like a character from a Western film. As a young man, he had been a notable horseman, once riding for Cambridge against the Army at Olympia. In 1959, he was delighted to find the Grand Canary form of the Blue Chaffinch in the same pine forest where he had collected the second known specimen nearly 50 years earlier.

Few people nowadays can see original paintings by the late David Reid Henry (D. M. Henry) and we must be grateful to David Bannerman (and Oliver & Boyd) for the opportunity to admire his work in high-quality reproduction in books such as *The Birds of the Atlantic Islands*. Some of the plates were painted at the Bannermans' home in Scotland, where the artist arrived with his ferocious Crowned Hawk-eagle, 'Tiara', which had travelled from London in the guard's-van.

The smaller format of *The Handbook of the Birds of Cyprus* (1971) and *The Birds of the Maltese Archipelago* (1976) gave less scope for the author's narrative, anecdotal writing. His last ventures were to Mallorca in 1977, whence he wrote characteristically, enjoying the island but cursing the hassle at Heathrow. In spite of recurrent illness, he courageously continued writing in his last years, greatly encouraged by his wife. He had almost finished *The Birds of the Balearic Islands* at the time of his death.

David Bannerman was warm in friendship, forthright, even blunt, in opinion, with an impish sense of fun, retained into old age. As an ornithologist, he was deeply rooted in the older traditions, not concealing his dislike of much modern scientific writing. He generously acknowledged the work of others, but was justly proud of his own achievements. For these, he received many honours, among them the OBE, LLD (Glasgow) and the Gold Medal of the BOU. As an Hon. President of the Scottish Orni-

thologists' Club, he often travelled from his home on the Solway to take an active part in council meetings.

He was an assiduous letter writer, replying to correspondents with alacrity, always in long-hand and usually at length. Often, in my own experience, important sentences were added in the margins or, sometimes, on the flap of the envelope. When we were discussing illustrations for his Balearic book, his teasing comment on my suggestion that a good variety of waders be shown was that he had always regarded them more as sporting than pictorial birds. In his younger days, he was a keen game shot, as is often apparent in his writings.

Many of the leading ornithologists of today will recall with gratitude his helpfulness at the museum in their younger days. His contributions to knowledge, especially on distribution and taxonomy of birds, were massive, but he will be remembered most of all for his monumental books, the like of which will not be seen again.

DONALD WATSON

Mystery photographs

37 Last month's mystery photograph (plate 239, repeated here at reduced size) was perhaps the most difficult of all those yet included in this series. Not only did it feature a species not on the British and Irish list (indeed, barely on the European list), but one that is incorrectly depicted in the most accessible field guide in which it is illustrated at all. Nowadays, however, many observers travel to North Africa and the Near East, where this species breeds, and the lack of good portraits of it has caused more than one instance of bewilderment and misidentification.



But what is this mysterious species? It is clearly a passerine, and comparison with the twigs, earth and rocks gives an indication of its size. The bulky body, small head, longish tail and speckled upper breast suggest a small thrush *Turdus* or a pipit *Anthus*; the slightly raised head, with upward-pointing bill, also brings those two groups to mind. The head is turned slightly towards the observer, so that the bill is foreshortened, but it is clearly rather thrush-like and perhaps too thick for a pipit. The bird's shape, however, so strongly recalls a heavy pipit such as Rock *A. spinoletta* that it is as a strange pipit that this species is most often misidentified. There is, however, no prominent line of wing-covert spots, so characteristic of Tawny *A. campestris*, and the uniformity of its upperparts rules out the other pipits.

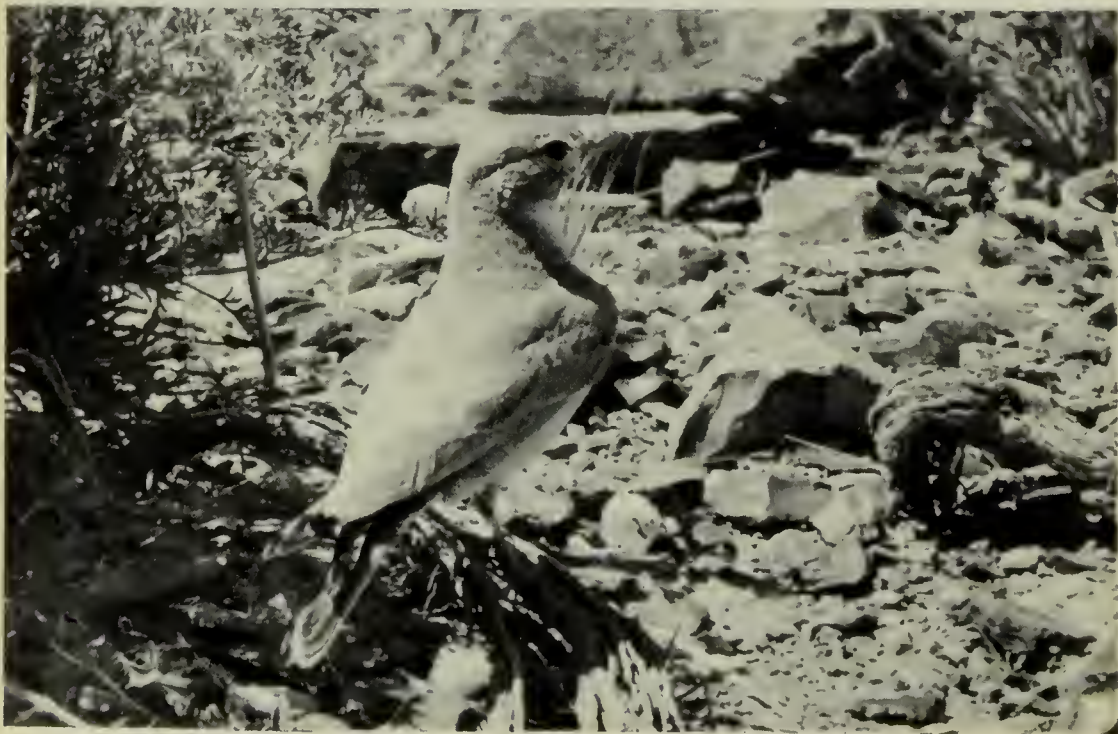
Bill-shape, stance, breast-spotting and upperpart uniformity may briefly suggest a thrush, but there are no west Palearctic or Nearctic species which

fit the visible (negligible!) plumage characteristics: there are no clear malar stripes, which are possessed by the small American thrushes such as Swainson's *Catharus ustulatus*.

There is a diffuse—but wide—supercilium, more prominent in front of than behind the eye and the lores look dark; the wingtips seem darker than the rest of the wing or upperparts and the tail looks bi- or tri-coloured (this species is actually very variable in its coloration, so that a colour picture would not, in this case, necessarily have aided identification). It is a thrush-like or pipit-like 'something else', but what?

Although 'identification by elimination' is frowned on in public, we all know that, in practice, this is how each individual field identification of an unfamiliar bird is achieved. Consideration of the possibilities will show that it must be a lark (*Alaudidae*); and, among the larks, the thrush-like or pipit-like shape is diagnostic of Desert *Ammomanes deserti*. Indeed, shape is the vital feature, since Vaurie (1959, *The Birds of the Palearctic Fauna: Passeriformes*) recognised no fewer than 17 races, varying from pale cream-coloured (*A. d. azizi*) to dark sooty-grey (*A. d. annae*); confusingly, the dark pinkish-grey or olive-brown Moroccan race (*A. d. payni*) has the coloration as well as the shape of a 'Water Pipit' *Anthus s. spinoletta*. Some field guides depict the Desert Lark as almost identical to a Bar-tailed Desert Lark *Ammomanes cincturus*, apart from the lack of a dark terminal band on its tail. They are actually totally different: to my eyes, the shape of Bar-tailed Desert (plate 4) recalls a finch rather than a pipit; other observers compare Desert with Skylark *Alauda arvensis* and Bar-tailed Desert with Short-toed Lark *Calandrella brachydactyla*. Both species are potential—though not expected—additions to the British and Irish list. Eric Hosking's two photographs were both taken in Jordan in April 1963. JTRS

4. Bar-tailed Desert Lark *Ammomanes cincturus*, Jordan, April 1963 (Eric Hosking)





5. Mystery photograph 38. Identify the species. Answer next month

Notes

Diving action of Red-necked Grebes No description is given for the feeding dive of the Red-necked Grebe *Podiceps grisegena* in *BWP*. During February to April 1979, we watched 12 individuals, four over a long period of time on three reservoirs in Avon and eight for shorter periods at coastal sites in Dorset and Suffolk. We found that when actively feeding they invariably dived with a distinctive 'springing dive': an initial leap well clear of the surface, entering at an acute angle, rather like a Shag *Phalacrocorax aristotelis*. This dive was used in conditions varying from very calm to very rough. With the Avon birds, depth of water varied between a few metres and 14 metres. These birds fed mainly on fish about 2-4 cm (occasionally up to 6 cm) in length which were usually brought to the surface and manipulated in the bill before being swallowed.

This action presumably enables them to reach greater depths when pursuing fish, which apparently predominate in their winter diet. This distinctive action may not be used in summer, when they feed mainly on invertebrates.

The Red-necked Grebes which we watched occasionally jumped less strongly, diving more like Slavonian Grebes *P. auritus*, or on occasion, particularly when not feeding, without clearing the surface. Conversely, Great Crested Grebes *P. cristatus* will sometimes jump clear of the surface;



nevertheless, we believe that the distinctive dive of the Red-necked Grebe is a useful indicator when identifying distant birds in winter.

A. H. DAVIS and K. E. VINICOMBE
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We draw attention to the general comments on the diving actions of grebes by Dr K. E. L. Simmons which follow. We welcome further observations, quantified for the different species.
EDS

Diving actions of grebes Neither the adult Red-necked Grebes *Podiceps grisegena* whose feeding dives I timed in Denmark in June 1967 nor the immature bird at Cheddar Reservoir, Somerset, in September 1969 (see *Brit. Birds* 63: 300-302) used the 'springing dive' observed by A. H. Davis and K. E. Vinicombe at various sites in England during February to April 1979 (see above). My birds mostly submerged in the smooth manner typical of the Great Crested Grebe *P. cristatus*. The immature Red-necked Grebe, however, produced a noticeable 'double-splash' as it dived: (1) two weak splashes or swirls to the rear as it swung its head down at the start of its action; (2) then two stronger splashes, farther apart, one each side of its posterior flanks, as it went under. I have not seen a Great Crested Grebe dive in this splashing manner, nor are 'springing dives' apparently common for this species. In my *Studies on Great Crested Grebes* (1955), after describing the usual smooth type of feeding dive, I added 'Sometimes, when the dive is made from a more buoyant floating or swimming position, the forward spring can be seen.' This is hardly a leap, however, so any large grebe seen diving persistently in a distinctive manner is worth checking for identity, although the species could not be safely identified on these characters alone (see below).

A. C. Bent, in his *Life Histories of North American Diving Birds* (1919), noted of the Red-necked Grebe that: 'When undisturbed and not hurried it makes a graceful curving plunge, leaving the water entirely and going straight down', adding 'probably it can dive to a greater depth in this way than any other'. The type of feeding dive used ('smooth' or 'springing') would indeed seem to depend to some extent on the depth of the water, but also on the nature of the prey (invertebrates or fish) and the location of its usual capture (at the bottom or in the intermediate water layer). G. E. Lawrence, who coined the term 'springing dive' (see *Condor* 50: 3-16), found that the essentially fish-eating Western Grebe *Aechmophorus occidentalis* dived thus mostly in conditions of strong wind and rough water; similarly, J. Fjeldså (*Vidensk. Medd. dansk naturh. Foren.* 136: 57-95) noted that northern populations of the Slavonian Grebe *P. auritus*, which include many fish in their diet, use the more violent springing dive mainly in rough seas or when diving into the swell on coasts. R. W. Storer (*Condor* 71: 180-205), studying the Slavonian Grebe in America, found that the two types of feeding dive graded into one another, and this is probably true at times of all grebes, including the Great Crested which can also be expected to use springing dives on occasion.

K. E. L. SIMMONS

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Female Goldeneye spinning On 15th January 1978, at Covenham Reservoir, Lincolnshire, I watched nine Goldeneyes *Bucephala clangula* displaying. On closer approach, I noticed an additional female keeping about 10 m away from the group and about 5 m from the side of the reservoir. This female was constantly spinning round in circles on the surface. As I moved even closer, the displaying group flew away across the reservoir, leaving the single duck still spinning. It spun both clockwise and anti-clockwise, and almost always dived after a period of spinning. After a short while, it flew about 300 m along the reservoir and landed, on its own, about 5 m from the edge, where it proceeded to spin again, turning about five or six times before diving. I approached closer, but it again took off and this time flew away without stopping. I noticed that it had both legs intact.

A. C. SIMS

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Raptors in urban areas during hard weather In February 1978, a very cold spell with widespread snow brought several species of birds to the suburbs of Liverpool, Merseyside. As well as the expected Redwings *Turdus iliacus*, there were flocks of Linnets *Carduelis cannabina*, Goldfinches *C. carduelis* and Chaffinches *Fringilla coelebs* in the city centre, feeding in areas of slum clearance. The occasional Merlin *Falco columbarius* also appeared and, more surprisingly, on 17th February a female Hen Harrier *Circus cyaneus* was seen in the Birkenhead suburbs chasing a small bird; it was later reported flying over buildings towards the River Mersey. On 23rd, I watched a female Hen Harrier attempting to catch birds at a slum clearance site close to a busy main road; it was hunting by flying low, periodically checking, and lunging at the ground, but failed to make a kill; occasionally it pursued a finch in twisting and turning flight, but still without success, and after 15 minutes flew off as the finches scattered. I could not, however, be sure that this was the same harrier as that seen on 23rd.

DENNIS GREEN

199 Deysbrook Lane, West Derby, Liverpool L12 4YE

Individual recognition and winter behaviour of Water Rails Almost daily from 11th November 1971 to 12th January 1972, I visited a quiet stream at Lelant, Cornwall, where eight or nine Water Rails *Rallus aquaticus* were wintering. Just before my study of these was cut short by building activities at the site, I was able to recognise them individually, mainly by careful observation of their undertail-coverts, which I sketched in the field. From my sketches, Robin Prytherch produced finished drawings (fig. 1). Although some appear rather similar, there are, nevertheless, recognisable differences. Those with deep black markings were fully adult males, a fact which I later confirmed by examining skins at the British Museum (Natural History).

During the rather short period of my study, the rails seldom strayed from a stretch of the stream about 64 m long and 4 m wide. On one side there was a high earth bank, well foliated with undergrowth and bushes; and, opposite, a rough path and bushes and vegetation which partly screened

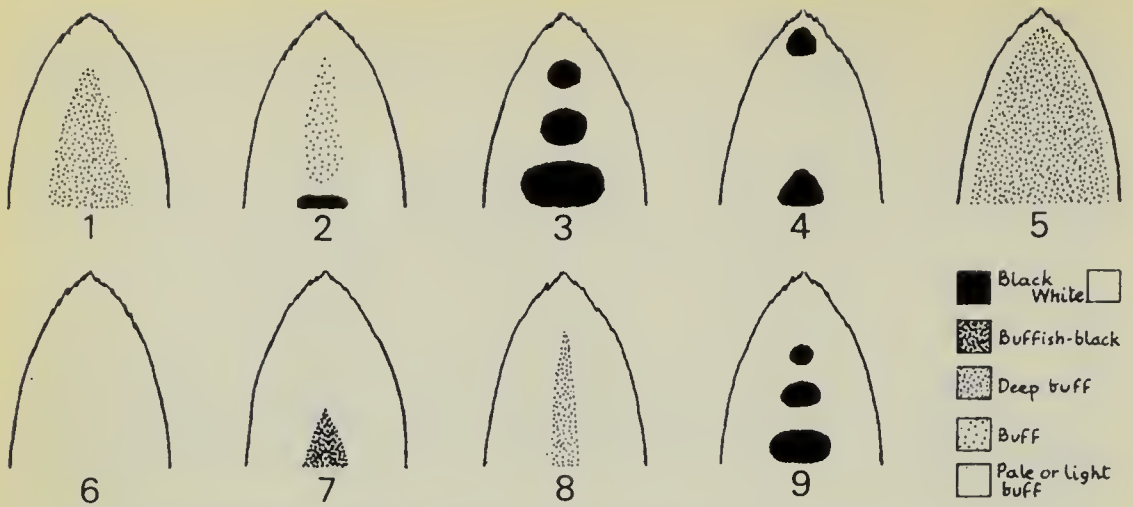


Fig. 1. Undertail-covert patterns of wintering Water Rails *Rallus aquaticus*, Cornwall, 1971/72 (Robin Prytherch, from sketches by Bernard King)

the stream. To obtain uninterrupted views, I often had to stand partly in the open. At first, the rails quickly scurried into cover and sporadically called 'kik-kik-kik', but after about a week my presence was more or less accepted, and later, when I wilfully but quietly moved, they hid temporarily, without calling, and soon returned to feed. After a while, I found the rails to be fairly evenly distributed along the stream and holding loosely defined feeding territories. They spent their time mainly along or near the water's edge, probing for food in the shallows; or in deep water, with heads momentarily below the surface, their bills rapidly sought edible items in the sediments. When rain had softened the earth banks, individuals left the stream and, rather like Blackbirds *Turdus merula*, dug vigorously in the earth and often captured earthworms (Lumbricidae) of varying sizes; these were always taken to the water, washed by rapid head-swishing movements, and soon swallowed. Occasionally, I threw small pieces of soft bread into the stream or on to the banks; when found, these were quickly eaten.

There was much bickering among the feeding Water Rails, especially where dominant males became involved. The latter were noticeably larger than the others and more clearly patterned, with deeper-coloured bills and legs. When individuals contested feeding areas, aggressive performances were seen; and curious noises, described in *The Handbook* as 'sharming', were heard—a singular discordant noise generally beginning as a kind of grunting and ending in a squeal, rather like that of a pig. This was never directed towards me or, to my knowledge, any other human being. These performances were rather ritualised and reminded me in many ways of cockerels *Gallus* fighting: on first meeting, both rails, with bills a little open and throats rapidly vibrating, immediately sharmed at each other as they stood high on their toes, with necks and heads stretched upward, so making their bodies appear more elongated, and sometimes with breasts almost touching. Then they started head-jerking, with bills thrusting towards one another, each stepping aggressively forward or momentarily retreating. These contests lasted about 20 seconds or less before one rail retreated a little, with head turned half away and head and neck still fully stretched and by now almost touching the ground; it quietly retreated towards its own

feeding ground, while the victor, still keeping its aggressive stance, blatantly shamed and moved its head to and fro, standing defiantly with wings partly outstretched cockerel-like, before it, too, resumed normal feeding.

Glutz *et al.* (1973, *Die Vögel Mitteleuropas*, vol. 5, pp. 390-394) gave great detail on breeding Water Rails, but little seems to have been recorded on their behaviour in winter quarters.

I wish to convey my thanks to Derek Goodwin, Robin Prytherch and Michael Wilson for their kind co-operation.

BERNARD KING

Gull Cry, 9 Park Road, Newlyn, Penzance, Cornwall

Moorhens' rapid construction of brood nest Lord Glendevon's note (*Brit. Birds* 72: 78) prompts me to record the following. On 24th July 1972, I was watching a family of two adult and three almost fully grown young Moorhens *Gallinula chloropus* on a small pond in Burnley, Lancashire. Suddenly a tremendous storm broke and torrential rain began to raise the water level in the pond. Four small young Moorhens, obviously the second brood, were in a brood nest which was rapidly becoming swamped. The other five Moorhens began to build another brood nest, using part of the original and also incorporating several potato-crisp packets and waste paper; within 15 minutes, the young were safely in this second nest and the first was beneath the surface of the pond. On 26th July, the water level had returned to normal and the four young were again using the original brood nest.

RON FREETHY

15 Lower Manor Lane, Burnley, Lancashire

Immature Herring Gulls picking up ice slivers On 15th February 1978, at Radipole Lake, Dorset, I observed a group of Herring Gulls *Larus argentatus* standing on part of the frozen lake, some of them drinking fresh water from the margin of the ice. About eight first-winter and one second-winter gulls picked up slivers of broken ice up to about 1.5 cm long from the water; they pecked at the ice, dropped pieces on to the frozen lake surface, and sometimes carried fragments in flight for short distances. On two occasions, attempts were made by one gull to rob another of its ice when in flight. None of several adult Herring Gulls present was seen to take part in this activity. It is possible that the inexperienced first-winters were reacting to a totally unfamiliar substance.

I. S. ROBERTSON

Bird Observatory, Fair Isle, Shetland

Hen Blackbird striking human intruders in defence of nest On 24th June 1952, at Dartford, Kent, I found the nest of a pair of Blackbirds *Turdus merula* well hidden about $\frac{3}{4}$ m up in a small clump of sapling elms *Ulmus* a few metres from a much-used door to a hospital ward. When I put my hand out to touch the hen, she flew only about 30 cm and then, crouched on a branch, raised her wings in threat posture. She then flew straight at me and struck me on the back of the head, withdrew only about a metre and made as if to fly at me again, clucking loudly in alarm throughout. I started to ring the four young, but the hen immediately began flying at me, again striking

the back of my head; she repeated these attacks at least ten times, several other stoops just missing me. Later, the male arrived and perched within a metre of my head; he remained there throughout, but made no attacks. The young had wing feathers just appearing; one was only half the size of the other three. All the hen's feathers seemed to be worn to points, her tail was only half its normal length and her wings very battered (which suggested to me that she frequently attacked potential predators), but she could fly quite well. On 30th June, the young were growing well; while we inspected the nest, the hen struck me once, and my companion twice, in the same manner as before.

GEOFFREY BEVEN

16 Parkwood Avenue, Esher, Surrey

Blackbirds, Mistle Thrushes and Wheatears in roofed areas The note about Blackbirds *Turdus merula* entering railway stations (*Brit. Birds* 71: 591) reminded me of a Blackbird I found on 11th July 1969 nesting in Cannon Street Station, in the City of London. This is essentially a commuter station, fairly quiet outside rush hours and closed at weekends. There are eight tracks served by four platforms extending from a fully enclosed passenger concourse at the north end and jutting out over the River Thames to the south. For much of their length, the platforms are covered for their full width by a corrugated and partly transparent roof, leaving only the tracks open to the sky. The Blackbird's nest, containing at least one young, was on a girder where this lower roof began and was about 4 m above the widest of the platforms and close under the transparent part of the roof, where, on sunny days, it must have been very hot. There was another nest in a nearby corner which may have been used in an earlier breeding attempt.

To reach the nest, the adult had either to drop down towards the track over one of the side walls and fly up again beneath the roof (unlikely if there was a train on that track) or to come up from the direction of the Thames by travelling along some 65 m of covered platform. In fact, seeing the female do this above the heads of commuters drew my attention to the nest.

D. J. MONTIER

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On 29th April 1974, I observed three Blackbirds in the semi-subterranean car-park below a large suburban shopping centre in Geneva, Switzerland. These birds had penetrated at least 50 m into the middle of this low-ceilinged, dimly lit and windowless building, evidently attracted by the spillages which sometimes occur when customers from the supermarket upstairs are loading their purchases into their cars.

J. D. WOOD

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My son David reported to me that he saw and heard a Blackbird singing from a girder within the canopy of Liverpool Street Station in the City of London, at about 08.00 GMT on 5th May 1975. As the bird was above the passenger concourse of the station, it would have been about 100 m inside the station.

R. B. WARREN

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At about 13.00 GMT on 11th November 1978, I observed a Blackbird apparently searching for food on one of the platforms at Liverpool Street Station, London. The platforms there are all well below street level and completely covered by roof. The bird dropped to the track adjoining my carriage and continued its foraging, until my train departed.

From the evidence quoted in *British Birds*, it would appear that Blackbirds are now following the example of feral Rock Doves *Columba livia* and House Sparrows *Passer domesticus* in frequenting railway station platforms and tracks, even under roofs. I cannot recall ever before having seen a Blackbird in such a location, in the course of over 60 years of railway journeys.

FRED ROWSWELL

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On a day in March 1977, I saw two Mistle Thrushes *T. viscivorus* flying around the girders 75 m inside the canopy roof of Piccadilly Railway Station, Manchester.

KENNETH A. DUMMIGAN

28 Ashbourne Road, Aigburth, Liverpool, Merseyside L17 9QH

At about 06.00 GMT on 23rd August 1977, an ornithological friend, P. N. Pascaud, working at Gare de Lyon Railway Station in the heart of Paris, was surprised to observe two Wheatears *Oenanthe oenanthe* feeding between the rails of a sidings track, under the roof of the station.

PHILIPPE DUBOIS

36 rue d'Angivillier, 78000 Versailles, France

Entering buildings is probably not an unusual habit for some species, including the Blackbird. Other examples include Pied Wagtails *Motacilla alba*, Song Thrushes *Turdus merula* and Robins *Erithacus rubecula*, which may nest within large commercial glasshouses or other buildings. In future, we shall not be publishing individual records, but we welcome submission of details which will be filed for eventual summary. EDS

Fan-tailed Warbler in Dorset At about midday on 24th June 1977, E. Salholm discovered a Fan-tailed Warbler *Cisticola juncidis* on Lodmoor, Dorset. Despite subsequent searches during the afternoon, it was not relocated until P. A. Coe and I found it not far away from where it had been originally seen. We obtained the following description:

Slightly smaller than juvenile Sedge Warbler *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus*, but differing markedly in shape, being shorter and dumper, with small rounded tail and short broad wings. Crown and nape brownish-black, with a number of buffish streakings from bill to nape. Pale buffish-white supercilium. Eye dark, with small buffish eye-ring. Lores dusky. Back and mantle reddish-buff, with heavy dark streaking. Rump and uppertail-coverts unstreaked reddish-buff. Tail rufous, shading gradually into broad darker subterminal band, with

feathers tipped white, which, although barely visible from above, was very noticeable on underside of tail. Underparts unstreaked whitish, palest on throat and shading to buffish on flanks and undertail-coverts. Wings brownish-black, feathers with reddish-buff edges. Bill thin and yellowish, darkening at tip. Legs pale yellowish. Bird frequently observed in song flight when, during high undulating flight, it uttered characteristic 'dzeep, dzeep, dzeep' song; also noted in song while perched.

During the subsequent few days, the warbler was seen by many observers, but was last noted on 28th June, following two days of cool, wet weather. This record fits clearly into the pattern of general spread of the species in northwest Europe, as documented by I. J. Ferguson-Lees and

Dr J. T. R. Sharrock (*Brit. Birds* 70: 152-159). There are, however, only two previous British and Irish records of the species: on Cape Clear Island, Co. Cork, in April 1962 (*Brit. Birds* 65: 501-510) and at Cley and Holme, Norfolk, in August-September 1976 (*Brit. Birds* 71: 275-277).

MARTIN CADE

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Goldcrest feeding by walking on floating vegetation On 19th February 1978, I watched a Goldcrest *Regulus regulus* for ten minutes feeding at the edge of Mosedale Beck, Wasdale Head, Cumbria, where the beck emerges from a large culvert in a sheltering embankment. The day was dry with a strong east wind; there was no snow cover, but the ground was frozen hard. The water was at least 1 m deep and fast-flowing, but mats of floating vegetation, mainly bulbous rush *Juncus bulbosus*, had accumulated in re-entrants in the bank. The Goldcrest fed along the sheltered sides of the bank, either in the marginal tufts of grass or on the floating mats. It constantly picked among the plants, and seemed unconcerned about being at times belly-deep in the water, wetting its underside and tail. Several times, it flew across the stream from one raft to another to continue its search. The nearest trees were about 1 km away, but there were extensive stretches of tall, old gorse *Ulex europaeus* within easy reach. The Goldcrest was alert, lively, in good plumage and apparently under no stress.

RALPH STOKOE

4 Fern Bank, Cockermouth, Cumbria

Feeding behaviour of Great Grey Shrikes The note on a Great Grey Shrike *Lanius excubitor* feeding on a refuse tip (*Brit. Birds* 71: 40) prompts me to record the following. Between June 1976 and early January 1977, in northeast Eritrea, I observed scavenging by a resident pair of Great Grey Shrikes. When I threw pieces of goat meat and fat on to the rocks by our 'camp', a shrike flew down to collect and eat them, sometimes after they had been on the rocks for more than a day and were dried. Such scavenging is not surprising, as shrikes return to their own 'larders' to feed on old carcasses. The shrikes became quite tame and frequently visited our camp, to which they were first attracted by large social wasps (Vespidae) which also fed on the meat. Predation by birds on social wasps has been well documented by Dr T. R. Birkhead (*Brit. Birds* 67: 221-229), and shrikes have already been recorded taking them (e.g. *Living Bird* 6: 43-86), as they did in Eritrea. As expected, the shrikes frequently took small birds, lizards, crickets and grasshoppers (Orthoptera); of at least seven species of lizard in the area, the rock-dwelling gecko *Ptyodactylus hasselquistii* seemed a common food. Adult cicadas (Cicadidae) were an important prey between July and September.

STEPHANIE J. TYLER

Yew Tree Cottage, Lone Lane, Penallt, Monmouth, Gwent

In 1969, on Djerba, Tunisia, Dr K. E. L. Simmons and his wife recorded a Great Grey Shrike frequenting a rubbish tip and formed the impression that it was attracted there by the potential bird prey (*Brit. Birds* 62: 203-204). Eds

Call-notes of Serin This note has been prompted by the rejection by the Rarities Committee of several claimed records of Serin *Serinus serinus*. Although the 'tirrilillit' note is undoubtedly the one most commonly associated with this species, there are others which may be less familiar.

In Majorca during April 1976, I first became aware of a note which I consider sounds very similar to the 'tchizzick' of the nominate race of the Pied Wagtail *Motacilla alba*. This may be the note which Peterson *et al.* (1974, *A Field Guide to the Birds of Britain and Europe*, 3rd edn) described as a hard 'chit-chit-chit' (recalling Wren *Troglodytes troglodytes*), although my own notes suggest a softer call, usually disyllabic, but occasionally trisyllabic.

Near Barcelona in December 1978, I heard another call, which I had not previously associated with this species. I can best describe it as a soft call-note, with an upward inflection, rather like the 'wheet' call of the Chaffinch *Fringilla coelebs*. This was usually followed by the more common 'tirrilillit'.

D. W. TAYLOR

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Fifty years ago . . .

'ON THE BREEDING-HABITS OF THE MANX SHEARWATER, WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO ITS INCUBATION- AND FLEDGING-PERIODS. By R. M. Lockley. It was with the main object of discovering the incubation- and fledging-periods that I marked a number of nests of the Manx Shearwater (*Puffinus p. puffinus*) on the island where I live. Skokholm lies off the far south-west Pembrokeshire . . . ' (*Brit. Birds* 23: 202, January 1930)

Letters

Bare-part colour of Snowy and Little Egrets The editorial comment which followed G. J. Oreel's letter on field identification of Snowy Egret *Egretta thula* (*Brit. Birds* 72: 128-129) was over-simplified and may be misleading. We hope that the following points will clarify the situation.

The bare facial skin of Little Egret *E. garzetta* is grey, tinged green, becoming orange at the start of breeding and mauvy-red at the peak of breeding activity. It seems possible that the loreal area may appear yellowish at the intermediate stages of colour change, and some individuals in eastern populations of Little Egret may normally have yellowish lores in the breeding season. On Snowy Egret, the loreal area is yellow, flushing a reddish or pale pink in the breeding season.

In view of the seasonal variation in foot colour of both species (from yellow to orange-yellow or orange), the actual tone of yellow would seem to be an unreliable character. Snowy Egrets do not always have the yellowish foot-colour extending up the back of the leg: this is apparently a character only of immatures, adults often having all-black legs. In North America, the yellow on the back of the legs of immature Snowy Egrets is often so

extensive that, when viewed from the rear, no dark is visible, leading to confusion with immature Little Blue Heron *E. caerulea*. There is no evidence that Little Egret has such extensive yellow on the back of the legs, although a recent photograph by E. Duscher (*Birds* vol. 7, no. 5: 20) shows a breeding Little Egret with orange-yellow extending a third of the way up the rear of the leg towards the tibio-tarsal joint.

It would seem, therefore, that yellow lores (especially outside the breeding season) and a long extension of yellowish up the back of the leg (to the tibio-tarsal joint or beyond) may be good indicators of Snowy, especially when both characters are present on the same individual.

P. J. GRANT, R. A. HUME, BERNARD KING, REBECCA PAYNE, WILL RUSSELL
and C. E. WHEELER

14 Heathfield Road, Ashford, Kent TN24 8QD

Raptors, relevance and reference G. H. Forster (*Brit. Birds* 72: 239) strongly implied that my paper on thermal soaring (70: 471) contains nothing that is not in his 1955 publication (48: 241). First, I agree with Mr Forster's own words about his 1955 paper: 'the conclusions that follow are mainly theoretical and have little substantive evidence to support them'. My own study centred on the observed daily pattern of soaring activity and its correlation with air temperature. In his review of the general circumstances that promote upcurrents, Mr Forster devoted half a page to the effect of time of day, in which no mention is made of birds, and there is an error of fact: the earth's surface does not begin to cool after midday, since on sunny days the air temperature reaches a maximum several hours after the sun reaches zenith (e.g. see R. Geiger, *The Climate Near the Ground*). I agree that absolute temperature is not important for the generation of thermals, but it remains a fact that a rise in temperature of surface air often leads to instability in the air mass. Since 1955, information has become available on several important phenomena: the fine structure of thermals and the way birds use them, the occurrence of large-scale effects (not dependent on localised heating) such as thermal streets, cellular convection, thermal waves and lee waves. Thus, I do find Mr Forster's comment that his 1955 article needs little or no correction rather surprising and maintain that my use of Wallington's *Meteorology for Glider Pilots* as a general reference was quite appropriate.

My comment on the lack of previous quantitative study (migration excepted) referred only to the daily cycle of soaring and, in that sense, I share Mr Elkins's surprise (72: 40) and note that he produced no evidence to disprove my assertion. His meteorological analysis gives more detailed reasons for rejecting a hypothesis that I also rejected and I wish to remark only that his use of the term 'lapse rate' to refer to the difference between ground surface and air temperatures is not normal practice. Whether the activity of soaring birds of prey reflects behavioural motivation as much as the availability of uplift needs much more study. In late July 1978, I found in central France that the ceiling maximum of soaring continues as long as the temperature ceiling, to three hours after midday (sun time). This might

suggest that juveniles and/or adults feeding young are strongly motivated to use thermals as long as possible.

C. J. HENTY

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This correspondence is now closed. EDS

Great Grey Shrike and birds of prey J. N. Dymond's note (*Brit. Birds* 72: 387) concerning a Great Grey Shrike *Lanius excubitor* singing at a Short-eared Owl *Asio flammeus* reminded me of the occasion on 5th August 1977 when I was watching a Great Grey Shrike hunting from telegraph wires at Gräsö, Uppland, Sweden. It was surveying a rocky knoll overlooking extensive reedbeds when, suddenly, it uttered a loud, hoarse 'err-err' and disappeared from view as a Hobby *Falco subbuteo* swept up from the marsh. The shrike saw the falcon long before I did and the episode drew my attention to an attribute of the Great Grey Shrike not familiar to me and related, possibly, to the behaviour observed by J. N. Dymond. Erik Rosenberg, in his classic *Fåglar i Sverige* (1953, reprinted 1972), noted the following observation which I have translated: 'the Great Grey Shrike often sings in winter quarters . . . At the sight of a Goshawk [*Accipiter gentilis*] he emits a warning call, which sounds like vääh vääh. (Birdtrappers in the oldendays used Great Grey Shrikes to find out when a falcon was in the vicinity and the right time to release the lure. They could tell from the bird's call which type of bird of prey he had seen in the distance.)'

MIKE HENRY

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Photographic requests

We hope that bird-photographers can help us by supplying black-and-white prints of the species listed below. These are needed to illustrate papers currently in preparation. We try to show each species in a variety of plumages and situations, so that, as well as photographs at the nest, we seek flight shots and pictures of flocks, of birds in non-breeding plumage, of migrants, of display and so on. The following list supersedes those published previously (*Brit. Birds* 71: 601; 72: 83).

Red-throated Diver *Gavia stellata*
 Black-throated Diver *G. arctica*
 Great Northern Diver *G. immer*
 White-billed Diver *G. adamsii*
 Soft-plumaged Petrel *Pterodroma mollis*
 Little Shearwater *Puffinus assimilis*
 Leach's Petrel *Oceanodroma leucorhoa*
 White Pelican *Pelecanus onocrotalus*
 Bittern *Botaurus stellaris*
 Purple Heron *Ardea purpurea*
 Surf Scoter *Melanitta perspicillata*
 Ruddy Duck *Oxyura jamaicensis*
 Honey Buzzard *Pernis apivorus*

Goshawk *Accipiter gentilis*
 Sparrowhawk *A. nisus*
 Tawny/Steppe Eagle *Aquila rapax*
 Imperial Eagle *A. heliaca*
 American Kestrel *Falco sparverius*
 Hobby *F. subbuteo*
 Eleonora's Falcon *F. eleonora*
 Spotted Crane *Porzana porzana*
 Little Crane *P. parva*
 Baillon's Crane *P. pusilla*
 Semipalmated Plover *Charadrius semipalmatus*
 Lesser Sand Plover *C. mongolus*
 Greater Sand Plover *C. leschenaultii*

Semipalmated Sandpiper *Calidris pusilla*
 Western Sandpiper *C. mauri*
 Red-necked Stint *C. ruficollis*
 Long-toed Stint *C. subminuta*
 Least Sandpiper *C. minutilla*
 Pectoral Sandpiper *C. melanotos*
 Sharp-tailed Sandpiper *C. acuminata*
 Short-billed Dowitcher *Limnodromus griseus*
 Long-billed Dowitcher *L. scolopaceus*
 Asiatic Dowitcher *L. semipalmatus*
 Woodcock *Scolopax rusticola*
 Red-necked Phalarope *Phalaropus lobatus*
 Grey Phalarope *P. fulicarius*
 Pomarine Skua *Stercorarius pomarinus*
 Arctic Skua *S. parasiticus*
 Long-tailed Skua *S. longicaudus*
 Great Skua *S. skua*
 South Polar Skua *S. maccormicki*
 Mediterranean Gull *Larus melanocephalus*
 Gull-billed Tern *Gelochelidon nilotica*
 Lesser Crested Tern *Sterna bengalensis*
 Black Tern *Chlidonias niger*
 Scops Owl *Otus scops*
 Ural Owl *Strix uralensis*
 Great Grey Owl *S. nebulosa*
 Nightjar *Caprimulgus europaeus*
 Pallid Swift *Apus pallidus*

Belted Kingfisher *Ceryle alcyon*
 Wryneck *Jynx torquilla*
 Woodlark *Lullula arborea*
 Citrine Wagtail *Motacilla citreola*
 Pied Wagtail *M. alba*
 Dipper *Cinclus cinclus*
 Dunnock *Prunella modularis*
 Siberian Rubythroat *Luscinia calliope*
 Moustached Warbler *Acrocephalus melanopogon*
 Blyth's Reed Warbler *A. dumetorum*
 Olivaceous Warbler *Hippolais pallida*
 Booted Warbler *H. caligata*
 Upcher's Warbler *H. languida*
 Olive-tree Warbler *H. olivetorum*
 Icterine Warbler *H. icterina*
 Melodious Warbler *H. polyglotta*
 Rüppell's Warbler *Sylvia rueppelli*
 Greenish Warbler *Phylloscopus trochiloides*
 Arctic Warbler *P. borealis*
 Firecrest *Regulus ignicapillus*
 Crested Tit *Parus cristatus*
 Chough *Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax*
 Spanish Sparrow *Passer hispaniolensis*
 Hawfinch *Coccothraustes coccothraustes*
 Tennessee Warbler *Vermivora peregrina*
 White-crowned Sparrow *Zonotrichia leucophrys*
 Pallas's Reed Bunting *Emberiza pallasii*

Please send prints for consideration to the editorial address: *British Birds*, Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3NJ.

Announcements



Young Ornithologists of the Year The 1979 winners are B. Bree (aged 16) of Jersey in the senior age-group, Jane Cutler (12) of London in the intermediate age-group, and Paul Chapman (8) of Carlisle in the junior age-group. Fuller details will appear in the March issue, after the presentation of the prizes.

YOC cover design competition This month's cover of a Reed Bunting was the winning painting in a Young Ornithologists' Club competition to design a cover for *BB*. The artist, 16-year-old Rosamund Aspinall, who lives in Rugby, received a year's free subscription to *BB* and a copy of *The Atlas of Breeding Birds in Britain and Ireland* as her prize.



The three judges, Robert Gillmor, Peter Holden and Dr J. T. R. Sharrock, also short-listed the designs of the following artists: Alan Hough (Lancashire), Christopher Jarrett (West Sussex), W. R. Meek (Grimsby), Kenneth Robertson (Glasgow), Andrew Tuddenham (York) and Richard Whittlestone (South Yorkshire).

Rarities Committee secretary Applications are invited from anyone who would like to be considered as a possible successor to M. J. Rogers as honorary secretary to the Rarities Committee. Prime attributes are a good knowledge of rarities and identification, the ability to maintain efficiently a detailed system of records and liaison with county recorders, and, most importantly, a good deal of time to devote to the task: sometimes as much as 30 hours per week. It should be stressed that at present MJR has no plans to retire, so there will be ample opportunity for possible successors to be fully familiarised with the workings of the job well in advance of taking over; in the meantime, they may be called upon to give secretarial assistance for special tasks. Applications should be sent to: P. J. Grant, chairman BBRC, 14 Heathfield Road, Ashford, Kent TN24 8QD.



The closing date for submission of entries for the fourth of these annual awards is 31st January 1980. Up to three colour transparencies taken during 1979 may be submitted by each photographer. The three judges (Eric Hosking, Michael W. Richards and Dr J. T. R. Sharrock)

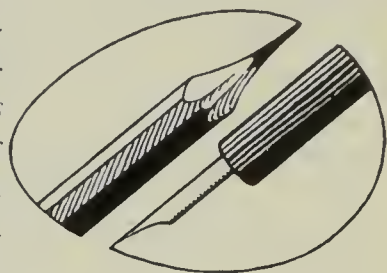
will assess them on interest and originality as well as technical excellence. Preference will be given to photographs taken in Britain or Ireland, but those of species on the British and Irish list taken elsewhere are also eligible. A brief account (not more than 200 words) should be enclosed with each, giving the circumstances in which obtained, the method used, technical details (focal length of lens and make of camera and film), locality, date and photographer's name and address. Transparencies will be returned only if accompanied by a suitable stamped and addressed envelope.

Transparencies should be clearly marked 'Bird Photograph of the Year' and sent to the editorial office at Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3NJ.

Best recent black-and-white bird-photographs The closing date for submission of prints for the twenty-first annual selection is 31st March 1980. As in the two previous years, details of the photographs selected and of the winning photographers will be included in a special press release which will be distributed simultaneously with publication in *British Birds*.

The following details should be written on the back of each print: photographer's name and address, species, county (or country, if taken abroad), month, year, and technical details, such as make and size of camera, make and focal length of lens, type of film material, exposure and approximate distance from the subject. Photographers may submit as many prints as they wish; entries should be addressed to 'Best recent work', Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3NJ.

Bird Illustrator of the Year Amateur and professional artists are invited to submit four line-drawings suitable for reproduction in *British Birds* (pen-and-ink or scraperboard, but not pencil or wash). The subjects should be birds recorded in the west Palearctic (Europe, North Africa and the Middle East). Exact size is important: drawings will be published at the following sizes (width $\times$ depth in cm): 12.2×13.7 , 10.9×4.6 and 5.3×4.0 , but those submitted should be 'half-up' ($1\frac{1}{2}$ times) or double these dimensions. Each set of four drawings should include at least one of each of the three sizes. Entries will be judged as sets. The announcement of the 1979 winners (*Brit. Birds* 72: 403-409) included suggestions intended to help future entrants.



The judging panel will consist of two members of the Society of Wildlife Artists, Dr Eric Ennion and Robert Gillmor, and the managing editor of *British Birds*, Dr J. T. R. Sharrock.

The winner will receive £75 and an inscribed salver, and the two runners-up will receive £40 and £25. All three artists will also be invited to attend the award presentation at a press reception in London, where a selection of the drawings will be on display. Artists whose work is displayed will also be welcome to attend the reception, which in 1979 provided a very happy occasion for meeting many of our top bird artists.

Entries will remain the copyright of the artists, but are accepted on the understanding that they may be reproduced free in or on the cover of *British Birds*. If accompanied by a suitable stamped and addressed envelope, all drawings will be returned to the artists, but any selected for possible use in *British Birds* may be retained for up to 12 months after the award presentation.

Each drawing must be marked clearly on the back with the artist's name and address (and date of birth if aged under 21, see 'The Richard Richardson Award', below), the identity of the species and any other relevant information about the illustration. The closing date will be 31st May 1980; the set of four drawings should be sent to 'Bird Illustrator of the Year', Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3NJ.

The Richard Richardson Award To encourage young, up-and-coming bird artists, a special award (a cheque and a book to the total value of £50) will be presented for the best work submitted for the 'Bird Illustrator of the Year' competition (see above) by an artist aged under 21 years on 31st May 1980. This award is in memory of the famous Norfolk ornithologist and

bird-artist, the late R. A. Richardson. The rules for entry are exactly the same as for 'Bird Illustrator of the Year' and entries by persons under 21 will automatically be considered for both awards.

Requests

Colour-marked Ringed Plovers and other waders In the August 1979 issue (*Brit. Birds* 72: 394), Dr A. Siefke of Vogelwarte Hiddensee requested sightings of colour-ringed Ringed Plovers *Charadrius hiaticula*. Unknown to each other, Dr Siefke and I have been operating very similar marking schemes for this species since 1973. We have now arranged ways to avoid future clashes. Anyone sighting such Ringed Plovers in Britain and Ireland should send details to the address at the end of this request and details of relevant ones will be passed to Dr Siefke.

Clearly, conflicting colour-marking schemes can seriously jeopardise the results from such studies and this problem is particularly great for waders, which move widely between countries. Accordingly, the Wader Study Group has established (and publishes in its *Bulletin*) an international register of colour-ringing, colour-dyeing and similar schemes for waders. This is additional to the national registers maintained by several national ringing authorities. Any wader-marker who has not notified his scheme to the Wader Study Group is requested to do so as soon as possible. Anyone proposing to start marking waders should also liaise beforehand so that compatible systems can be arranged. Clearly, anyone not checking in this way will be jeopardising his own results as well as those of other workers. Please write to M. W. Pienkowski (editor, *Wader Study Group Bulletin*), Department of Zoology, University of Durham, South Road, Durham DH1 3LE.

Waders marked with colour-dye and leg-flags During the current winter, waders of several species are being marked with various dyes and/or temporary flag-shaped leg rings of various colours. This is part of an investigation of movements within and between estuaries during a winter: information urgently required by conservation and planning organisations. The work is being co-ordinated by the Nature Conservancy Council and the University of Durham, with the co-operation of many other ringers and groups, mainly at the Tees and the Forth Estuaries, but also at several other localities. Sightings of these marked birds would be very helpful. Observers should note the species, colour of the dye, its position on the birds (e.g. breast, belly, or rump), and/or colour of leg flag; also, if possible, the number of birds in the flock checked for marks. Less complete information is also very welcome. Observers will be notified of the origins of the birds. Records should be sent to M. W. Pienkowski, Department of Zoology, University of Durham, South Road, Durham DH1 3LE.

News and comment

Peter Conder and Mike Everett

CITES meeting The second meeting of the parties to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) was held in San José, the capital of Costa Rica, in March. Delegates representing 39 parties to the Convention attended, and a further 15 states were present as observers, as well as 55 non-government organisations. The delegates to the meeting had to consider 300 individual changes to the three appendices of the Convention. The most significant change regarding birds was the addition of all birds of prey, both nocturnal and diurnal (except

New World vultures), to Appendix II. This will enable close monitoring of owls, hawks, eagles and other species which are often highly vulnerable to threats from trade, especially falconry (*Habitat*).

Countryside and Wildlife Bill The proposed Bill to cover the EEC Bird Directive, habitat protection, wetlands and the former Countryside Bill (see *Habitat*, no. 6, 1979) has been given the title of the Countryside and Wildlife Bill. Final details from the Depart-

ment of the Environment are awaited with interest by the voluntary wildlife conservation bodies, which will undoubtedly wish to comment on its content.

WEBS Conference The prime aim of the Working-group of European Bird Protection Societies (WEBS) is to strengthen national bird protection societies throughout Europe by discussing problems and sharing solutions. The working group has just completed its third conference, hosted in 1979 by the RSPB in England; delegates from member societies in 17 countries met and discussed issues affecting their work, such as the implementation of the EEC directive on the Conservation of Wild Birds and their Habitats, the roles of advisory committees under this directive and, after implementation, the difficulties expected in enforcing the laws in some areas. Later, societies exchanged ideas for fund-raising. During discussions of youth projects, a Europe-wide migration phone-in which would cover Europe from Malta to Lapland was tentatively welcomed as an idea to combine education and co-operation. Further discussions covered oil pollution, and possible conflicts with farmers and game-rearing interests as Goshawks *Accipiter gentilis* increased under protection. (Contributed by A. B. Gammell)

European atlas news At its fourth meeting, at Göttingen in the Federal German Republic in September 1979, the European Ornithological Atlas Committee confirmed its resolve to institute and co-ordinate fieldwork during 1985-88 in every European country, leading to publication in 1990/1991 of an *Atlas of the Breeding Birds of Europe*. There will be a map of the summer distribution of every species nesting in Europe (using the 50 × 50 km squares of the UTM grid), with a facing page of English text, in the style familiar in the British and Irish *The Atlas of Breeding Birds in Britain and Ireland*. The EOAC hopes to raise sufficient funds for a full-time co-ordinator during 1984-90. With the welcome addition of Dr Olav Renno as 'provisional co-ordinator' for the USSR, the EOAC now includes delegates from 24 member countries. It hopes that Austria, the Faeroe Islands, the German Democratic Republic, Iceland and Luxembourg, where contracts have already been established, will soon appoint delegates and participate. There remain only two outstanding gaps: Albania and Greece.

Winter atlas work has now started in France and the Netherlands and will soon start in Norway and the United Kingdom. Methodology for winter atlas surveys will be a major item for consideration at the next EOAC meeting, at León in Spain in September 1981. The following officers of the EOAC were elected for 1979-81: Dr J. T. R. Sharrock (UK, chairman), Dr Pierre Devillers (Belgium, treasurer), Dr K. Štastný (Czechoslovakia, joint-secretary, eastern Europe) and Dr F. J. Purroy (Spain, joint-secretary, western Europe).

Extinct Quango The Advisory Committee on Bird Sanctuaries in the Royal Parks has (in its present form) advised Ministers on bird conservation in the Royal Parks for 32 years. The Committee has been responsible, with the enthusiastic and effective co-operation of the relevant departments, for providing many sanctuaries, which have ensured the successful breeding in recent years of waterbirds such as Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea* and Great Crested Grebe *Podiceps cristatus*, and provided safe nesting areas for insectivorous birds, which have increased because of London's cleaner air. It has also given advice on improving the general habitat for birds, including tree planting, provision of shrubs and maintenance of lakes. During this time, the number of species breeding regularly in Inner London has increased from 29 to 40. This is largely due to increases in breeding species in the Royal Parks in that area. The Committee has maintained a network of Official Observers who have provided the vital data on changes in the bird life of the Royal Parks throughout the London area and their observations have been published in a series of regular reports. The Committee and the Official Observers are unpaid and the costs—the use of official time and so on—of running the Committee must be minute.

The Ministry has informed the advisory committee that, in future, advice will be obtained by informal contacts. This procedure is unlikely to be as efficient as a committee which can press for action as well as give advice when sought. There appears to be little justification for winding up this committee, apart from the cosmetic value of removing one name from the list of Quangos.

Maurice Brown of Hawk Mountain The curator emeritus of Hawk Mountain Sanctuary (Pennsylvania), Maurice Brown, has

died. Maurice Brown made an extraordinary contribution to the conservation of and concern for raptors. His book, *Hawks Aloft*, tells the story of the transformation of Hawk Mountain from a slaughter point for migrating raptors into an observatory that has done as much as any other institution concerned with birds to catch the imagination of visitors and to help in the education of new generations of birdwatchers and conservationists. Maurice Brown was the guiding genius from the earliest days of the sanctuary, and the international raptor conservation movement will forever be in his debt. (Contributed by Michael J. Thomas)

The Lincolnshire Bird Club This new club, covering Lincolnshire and south Humberside, has been formed to encourage and co-ordinate general birdwatching in the two counties, including the participation in county and national surveys and censuses, migration and sea-watching, and to monitor the successes and failures of the local breeding and wintering bird populations. The Lincolnshire Bird Club will promote indoor meetings with talks or films on the second or third Wednesday in each month through the winter. These meetings will be held at a variety of centres, to cater for birdwatchers from places as far apart as Scunthorpe and Spalding. The Club intends to publish regular newsletters and an annual bird report. The inaugural meeting was held at Horncastle on 14th November 1979. Membership: ordinary £5, family £6, under 18 and senior citizens £2.50, corporate £10. Application forms and further details are available from the hon. secretary: R. N. Goodall, 3 Kettleby View, Brigg, Humberside.

Protection of Birds Act centenary stamps

This January, the Post Office is issuing a set of four stamps, depicting Dipper *Cinclus cinclus*, Kingfisher *Alcedo atthis*, Yellow Wagtail *Motacilla flava* and Moorhen *Gallinula chloropus*, designed by Michael Warren, to mark the centenary of the Wild Birds Protection Act 1880. Splendid as the idea is, all the birds are associated with water and complaints by fishermen against the Kingfisher and the Moorhen are not unheard of. None of these birds has featured prominently in the last hundred years of bird protection, unlike the Goldfinch *Carduelis carduelis* or the Osprey *Pandion haliaetus*, to give two examples.

Also odd is the choice of the 1880 Act as a cause for celebration. The RSPB marked in 1969 the centenary of the Sea Birds Preservation Act 1869 as 'the first Act to protect birds for other than sporting purposes' (*Birds* 2: 267-270). Following the 1869 Act, Parliament passed two Wild Bird Protection Acts, in 1872 and 1876. Neither was very satisfactory and both were repealed when the 1880 Act was passed. The 1880 Act hardly fared any better, however, and was so defective that it earned the unenviable title of 'principal' Act in quick time. (The term 'principal' is applied only when an amending Act is passed.) In this case, the first amending Act came in the following year, but the confusion arising from the 1880 Act was apparently not really cleared up until the Wild Bird Protection Act of 1896.

SOC Conference The thirty-second annual conference of the Scottish Ornithologists' Club was held during 26th-28th October 1979 at the Marine Hotel, North Berwick, with an arctic bird theme. The main session of the conference opened with Dr Jeremy Greenwood giving an excellent survey of the Arctic from a bird's viewpoint. He was followed by Malcolm Ogilvie discussing the Scottish connections of arctic birds and then by Harry Green's paper on Greenland breeding waders in Britain, which told of results of work undertaken in biological expeditions to Greenland.

The Sunday morning session began with three short talks on ornithological research in Norway and Scotland by John Innes, Dr Chris Spray and David Merrie. Finally, Dr Hugh Boyd of the Canadian Wildlife Services lectured on the geese of the Canadian Arctic. As usual, the conference lived up to its reputation of providing good speakers on interesting subjects in excellent surroundings.

The usual *BB* mystery photograph competition attracted 70 entries. Three of the five species were correctly identified by seven entrants: Gary F. Bell, Alan Brown, Jean Burton, Dr Edmund Fellowes, Ian Gray, Angus Hogg and Chris Spray; and the only person to identify four correctly was Bob Scott. The winner of the traditional bottle of champagne, however, with all five species correctly named, was Roy Dennis.

BOU Conference The annual conference of the British Ornithologists' Union, held during 2nd-4th November 1979 at the Hayes Conference Centre, Swanwick, Derbyshire,

was, to use the concluding words of the BOU Chairman, Stanley Cramp, an outstanding success. The conference theme was 'Current studies in bird populations'. An excellent team of speakers included Drs C. Askenmo, Leo Batten, T. R. Birkhead, John Coulson, R. W. Furness, M. P. Harris, Ian Newton, Raymond O'Connor, Chris Perrins, G. R. Potts and P. A. Prince. Particularly interesting was Raymond O'Connor's talk on

the breeding dynamics of British Kestrels *Falco tinnunculus*: not only was it exceptionally well presented, but the material used had been collected during many BTO surveys. The value of just collecting scientific data and storing them has often been questioned, but his talk provided the justification of this policy. Anglia and BBC Television each provided excellent films for the Saturday evening.

Opinions expressed in this feature are not necessarily those of the editors of British Birds

Recent reports

*K. Allsopp and
R. A. Hume*

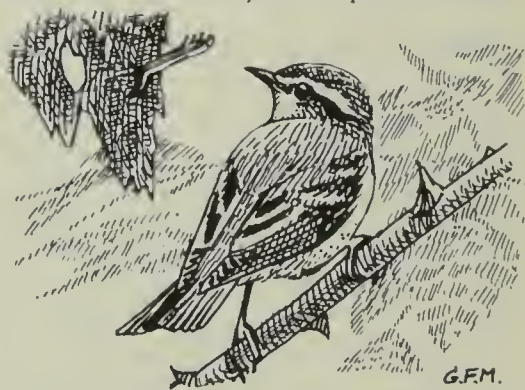
These are largely
unchecked reports,
not authenticated
records



This report covers October, and all dates refer to that month.

The month's weather was dominated by an anticyclone over the Continent, which gave southeasterly winds across the North Sea for long periods. The eastward-moving depressions crossing the Atlantic were halted to the west of the country and their associated fronts dividing the Continental air mass and the moist westerly air became slow-moving across the British Isles. Large falls of winter immigrants would be expected along these fronts in the associated rain and mist and some notable arrivals were reported from Fair Isle (Shetland), with an observatory record of 65,000 **Redwings** *Turdus iliacus* occurring on 14th. The previous night, when the same front crossed northern England, high numbers were grounded along the northeast coast. Further falls were experienced at Bardsey (Gwynedd) between 23rd and 28th, when another front remained stationary across western England. A similar weather pattern occurred on 29th, when 8,000 **Fieldfares** *T. pilaris* arrived on Fair Isle.

The weather conditions were also ideal for the arrival of Siberian passerine vagrants. During the first week, **Yellow-browed Warblers** *Phylloscopus inornatus* were reported in all British east coast areas, with ten on Fair Isle on 1st, and mainly singles from other localities, totalling about 30 birds. In the west, Bardsey, Cape Clear Island (Co. Cork) and the Isles of Scilly also reported arrivals,



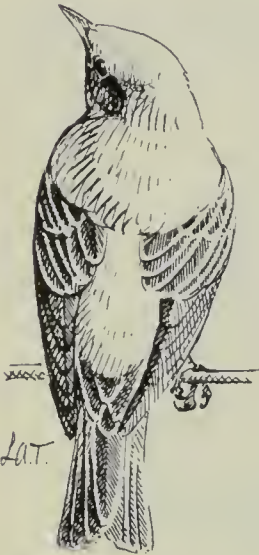
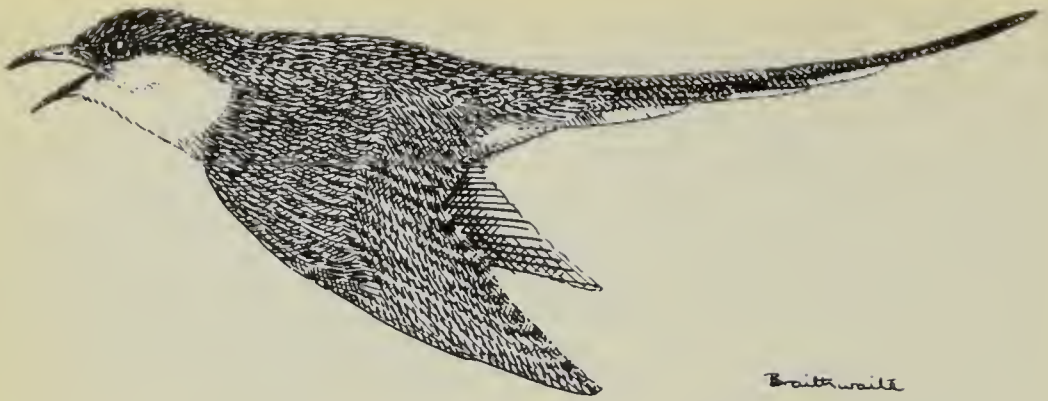
with five remaining at the latter intensely watched locality. The dates of arrival fit the normal pattern, as did those of the closely related **Pallas's Warbler** *P. proregulus*, which came mainly in the last two weeks of the

month. So far, 11 have been reported, seven of them from the Lincolnshire and Humber-side coast. One turned up on Fair Isle on 6th: an early date, and also a less favoured locality for this species. **Radde's Warblers** *P. schwarzi* were found at Fife Ness (Fife) on 5th, Cruden Bay (Grampian) on 7th and on the Isles of Scilly on 20th. The last locality also reported the only **Dusky Warbler** *P. fuscatus*, from 23rd to 26th. The field identification of *Acrocephalus* warblers has not yet been developed into a fine art. The previously reported **Blyth's Reed Warbler** *Acrocephalus dumetorum* in Scilly from 14th was eventually found to be a **Marsh Warbler** *A. palustris*, no doubt confounding many observers' opinions. Identification of a Blyth's Reed Warbler found at Weybourne (Norfolk) on 10th has, however, not been doubted. A second Marsh Warbler was also present in Scilly. Further vagrant warblers were a **Booted Warbler** *Hippolais caligata* at Newburgh (Grampian) on 15th, a **Desert Warbler** *Sylvia nana* at Meols (Merseyside) from 28th onwards into November (plate 6), and **Subalpine Warblers** *S. cantillans* on Fair Isle on 4th and in Scilly on 13th. Cape Clear Island, influenced more by the westerly weather, reported three **Icterine Warblers** *Hippolais icterina* in the first half of the month. The conditions were perhaps a little late for a good arrival of **Red-breasted Flycatchers** *Ficedula parva*, with only 12 reported, mainly in the first week on the

British east coast. **Firecrests** *Regulus ignicapillus* were widely reported, with an unusual number of records coming from the northeast coastal areas during the last week. Further passerine rarities were an **Isabelline Wheatear** *Oenanthe isabellina* at Girdle Ness (Grampian) from 19th, a **Pied Wheatear** *O. pleschanka* at Boulmer (Northumberland) on 28th to 29th, a **Citrine Wagtail** *Motacilla citreola* on Fair Isle from 2nd to 4th, **Red-throated Pipits** *Anthus cervinus* at Theale Gravel-pits (Berkshire) on 12th and 13th, at Tynemouth on 10th and another in Scilly on 6th. There were no less than 12 **Tawny Pipits** *A. campestris* in Scilly, and others at Weybourne on 15th and Wells (Norfolk) on 21st, and 23 reports of **Richard's Pipits** *A. novaeseelandiae*, ten of them from Fair Isle. An **Isabelline Shrike** *Lanius isabellinus* was reported in late September from Great Yarmouth (Norfolk), followed by another on Fair Isle on 26th. Rare buntings were also well represented, with three **Rustic Buntings** *Emberiza rustica* in Scilly from 10th to 13th, a **Little Bunting** *E. pusilla* at the same locality on 16th, and others at Filey Brigg (North Yorkshire) on 1st, St Abbs (Borders) on 6th (two), another on Holy Island (Northumberland), and one on Fair Isle from 6th to 13th, where there was another **Yellow-breasted Bunting** *E. aureola* on 1st. This extensive list of vagrants also included five **Scarlet Rosefinches** *Carpodacus erythrinus* from Fair Isle to Scilly,



6. Desert Warbler *Sylvia nana*, Merseyside, November 1979 (Jeff Pick)



where a **Rose-coloured Starling** *Sturnus roseus* was also found on 23rd. In Ireland, a **Serin** *Serinus serinus* appeared on Galley Head (Co. Cork).

Nearctic arrivals

The depressions crossing the Atlantic moved quite rapidly before being halted or diverted by the Continental high-pressure system, and several Nearctic passerines reached the west. Scilly received the lion's share, with a **Bobolink** *Dolichonyx oryzivorus* on 7th, a **Blackpoll Warbler** *Dendroica striata* on 11th and a **Rose-breasted Grosbeak** *Pheucticus ludovicianus* on 12th, following one on Cape Clear Island the day before. Three **Swainson's Thrushes** *Catharus ustulatus* arrived between 20th and 25th, followed by one or two others later and a **Grey-cheeked Thrush** *C. minimus* on 27th. Elsewhere, a **Scarlet Tanager** *Piranga olivacea* was reported from Hilbre (Cheshire) and a **Yellow-billed Cuckoo** *Coccyzus americanus* at Sligo.

A few more Nearctic waders arrived after September's impressive list. Following the 32 **Pectoral Sandpipers** *Calidris melanotos* listed



7. Adult female Pectoral Sandpiper *Calidris melanotos*, Kent, September 1979. D. J. Britton has commented: 'note heavily streaked throat and sides of neck, coarsely marked upperparts, inconspicuous, pale mantle line, lack of scapular line and streaked rather vague supercilium, all indicating adult; and lack of arrowheads in breast markings, indicating female' (R. J. Chandler)

previously (*Brit. Birds* 72: 559, 603; see plate 7), singles were found at Holy Island, Boulmer (Northumberland) on 21st and Ballycotton (Co. Cork) on 21st. Further **Long-billed Dowitchers** *Limnodromus scolopaceus* were reported at Abberton Reservoir (Essex) on 4th, Lough Bay (Co. Derry) on 6th, and twos at Ballycotton on 7th and 20th and Crowdy Reservoir (Cornwall) on 27th; there were also another two **Lesser Golden Plovers** *Pluvialis dominica* at Ballycotton. A **Spotted Sandpiper** *Actitis macularia* was also present at Ballymacoda (Co. Cork).

Wildfowl

A notable movement of **Barnacle Geese** *Branta leucopsis* took place on 1st, when 330 flew past Hartlepool (Cleveland) and 65 arrived on Fair Isle, with a further 33 on 6th. In Ireland, the Nearctic/Siberian **Brent Goose** *B. bernicla nigricans* has again returned to Strangford Lough (Co. Down). Other Nearctic wildfowl reported were an **American Wigeon** *Anas americana* at Cley (Norfolk) on 27th and 28th, and **Ring-necked Ducks** *Aythya collaris* at Barrow



Haven (Humberside) on 24th, in Scilly from 16th to 20th, and—two, one an immature—at Kilkerran Lake (Co. Cork) from 29th. A **Surf Scoter** *Melanitta perspicillata* has again arrived at Bundoran (Co. Donegal), having

been seen from early October. Again in Ireland, an unusual concentration of 18 **Black-necked Grebes** *Podiceps nigricollis* occurred in Co. Wexford.

Seabirds

No large-scale movements were reported. A few **Little Auks** *Alle alle*—all singles—were sighted in the last week at Cley, Filey Brigg, Bardsey and Fair Isle. A **Ring-billed Gull** *Larus delawarensis* visited the reserve at Fairburn Ings (West Yorkshire) on 29th without contacting the warden, Steve Madge, who was a little put out; and a **Laughing Gull** *L. atricilla* was seen at Huttoft (Lincolnshire) on 6th. The increasing number of records of Nearctic gulls probably reflects the general improvement in field identification among the increasing number of birdwatchers rather than increasing vagrancy of the birds. Further records of **Sabine's Gulls** *L. sabini*, after September's good numbers, were of one at Saltfleetby (Lincolnshire) on 5th, and three at Cape Clear Island and one at Hook Head (Co. Wexford) on 8th. At Newburgh (Grampian), the month ended with the appearance of a **White-billed Diver** *Gavia adamsii*. A further autumn **albatross** *Diomedea* was seen off St Johns Point (Co. Down) on 1st and 2nd. Finally, there is a very interesting report of a **White-bellied Storm Petrel** *Fregatta grallaria* flying past Seascale (Cumbria) on 23rd. This species nests in the South Atlantic, but there are no records of it in the North Atlantic.

Latest news

White-rumped Sandpiper *Calidris fuscicollis*, Blithfield Reservoir (Staffordshire); very few **Waxwings** *Bombycilla garrulus*, but 20 at Middlesbrough (Cleveland). Discovered in mid November, but still present in early December: **Greater Sand Plover** *Charadrius leschenaultii* (Avon) and **Belted Kingfisher** *Ceryle alcyon* (Cornwall).

Reviews

The Sulidae: gannets and boobies. By J. Bryan Nelson. Oxford University Press, Oxford, for the University of Aberdeen, 1978. 1,012 pages; 14 colour and 18 black-and-white plates; numerous photographs and figures in the text, including line-drawings by John Busby. £40.00.

Like many birdwatchers who actually buy books on ornithology, I have a particular penchant for lavishly illustrated, well-produced monographs of bird families. I also hope that such tomes will provide me with some insight into the evolutionary biology, behaviour, and taxonomy of the group or at least be good source books and give the basic information on social pattern, social behaviour, and breeding biology so that I can assess, comparatively, the species' behavioural ecology for myself. Alas, while often being beautiful examples of the book-maker's art, many monographs fall far short of my scientific requirements; indeed, one sometimes wonders just what were their authors' qualifications for presuming to write them in the first place! When I learned that Bryan Nelson was producing a comprehensive book on the Sulidae—a group in which I am particularly interested, having studied boobies (especially the Brown) and reviewed the family myself—I had very high hopes, for our approaches to the study of bird biology are closely akin, while his qualifications are impressive and unique—a long-term study in depth of our own (North Atlantic) Gannet in Scotland, supplemented by field trips abroad to study all six boobies (particularly the Red-footed, Masked, and Abbott's). Now that this huge, ambitious monograph has finally arrived, against the odds in these days of almost prohibitive publishing costs, I am not disappointed; indeed, I have no hesitation in declaring it the best book of its type that has yet appeared: one destined to become not only a great classic of the seabird literature, worthy of a place with Murphy's *Oceanic Birds of South America*, but a classic ornithological and behavioural monograph in its own right. Author and publishers are to be congratulated on their perspicacity and persistence; this deserves adequate reward by good sales: the science of ornithology for one owes them that, and this magnificent book should be on the shelves of everyone interested in seabirds and bird biology in general.

Following a foreword by Professor V. C. Wynne-Edwards and acknowledgements, the book starts with a brief two-page general introduction and then plunges straight into the species' accounts: 228 pages on the North Atlantic Gannet, 35 on the African (or Cape) Gannet, 48 on the Australasian Gannet, 99 on the White (Masked or Blue-faced) Booby, 88 on the Brown Booby, 66 on the Blue-faced Booby, 76 on the Peruvian Booby, 97 on the Red-footed Booby and 58 on Abbott's Booby; the main text ends with a 146-page section on 'The Sulids compared', followed by 19 appendices, a list of birds mentioned in the text, a bibliography and an index. At the end of the section on the Australasian Gannet, the three gannets are also separately compared. Nelson also discusses the taxonomy of the gannets here, and that of the whole family in the final section. I find the treatment rather disappointing. In a way, he has shelved the problems of taxonomic groupings within the Sulidae, taking the 'safe' course of placing all forms in the single genus *Sula*. The very similar gannets are evidently much more closely related to one another than any booby is to any other sulid, but the author prefers not to separate them in the genus *Morus*, as favoured by many taxonomists and seabird workers (including this reviewer), largely because of uncertainties about the relationships of the boobies to one another, which is a separate problem. Having just the one genus, Nelson treats the gannets, not as three races of a polytypic species (which would perhaps be the most logical step), but as three forms of a superspecies. Though technically such forms can be termed 'allospecies', in practice of course within their own avifaunas they are treated as three distinct species, which is ornithologically convenient and would please most people. To the certain confusion of most non-taxonomists, however, Nelson insists on treating each gannet formally as an allospecies without adequately explaining this concept or its nomenclatural conventions (the use of square brackets), which is out of place in a book of this type and more appropriate to zoogeographical analyses, comparative systematics and faunal listings.

Each of the main sections is organised on the same lines: (1) nomenclature and external features (common and scientific names, general features, detailed description, measurements and weights, moult and voice); (2) numbers and distribution; (3) breeding ecology; and (4) breeding behaviour (which also includes descriptions of maintenance behaviour and fishing). By this plan—and aided by comprehensive chapter headings, chapter summaries, and a general index—the author succeeds admirably in his aim of making it easy for the reader ('ornithologist, ecologist, ethologist or whatever') to locate facts about each species and the family as a whole, and to place these within their biological context. He also is successful in constructing a highly readable 'browsable book, with ideas and atmosphere as well as facts', one that is hard to put down (metaphorically anyway, for it weighs a ton!), page after page being packed with details and ideas on a great variety of topics—such as the evolution of displays, deferred maturity, synchronisation of breeding—and illustrated with photographs in

the text, figures, diagrams, tables and maps. It was particularly instructive for me to read Nelson's assessments of my own work on the Brown Booby (still to be reported in full) and of my theories on the significance of seabird plumage types (*Brit. Birds* 65: 465-479, 510-521). The facts of solid biology are discussed compellingly, mainly from the viewpoint of classical ethology and the discipline of behavioural ecology that arose from it in the 1960s. No account, however, has been taken of important recent developments in this last field arising, for example, from 'selfish gene' interpretations of the effects of natural and kin selection on behavioural strategies, but this is perhaps no bad thing historically or for the general reader as these new ideas—though fundamental—have yet to be fully and coherently formulated, let alone absorbed by fieldworkers dealing with the real world of birds in their natural environment. Nevertheless, a further assessment of solid social behaviour and breeding strategies will need to be made eventually, and Nelson's book will provide the essential basis from which this can be done.

The Sulidae is well-produced, attractive and imaginatively designed—and definitely not merely a book of the coffee-table variety. My only grumble here, hinted at above, is that it is too heavy and bulky for easy use, and rather insubstantially bound; it would have been much better in two volumes. The line-drawings by John Busby give particular pleasure: often very evocative, they are far from being merely decorative, illustrating not only a wide range of display and other postures, but also providing, for example, comparative identification drawings of sulids in flight (which seawatchers will find of great use, especially for the various immature plumages).

K. E. L. SIMMONS

Wildlife Sounds and their Recording. By Eric Simms. Paul Elek, London, 1979. 144 pages; 16 plates of photographs; 28 diagrams and line-drawings. £5.95.

An up-to-date book by Eric Simms on recording of wildlife sounds is especially welcome. He fully deserves to be ranked among the pioneering giants of this activity, now growing rapidly in popularity. Building on the foundations laid by his illustrious predecessor at the BBC, the late Dr Ludwig Koch, and others in Sweden and the USA, he was quick to introduce to the British scene a whole range of equipment and recording techniques. Thus, he switched at once from disc-recording, which Koch refused to abandon, to the demonstrably more practical and efficient system of recording on tape. Aided by Bob Wade, his inseparable companion in the 1950s, he was the first to use here with great effect the parabolic reflector, now an essential part of the wildlife recordist's armoury. He also experimented successfully with early battery-operated portable tape recorders, radio links and, for recording aquatic animals underwater, hydrophones. During these productive years of the 1950s, when the growth of the BBC's collection of wildlife sounds depended very largely upon Simms and Wade's own fieldwork, they added an immense number and variety of recordings to those made by Koch. Today, a large number of individuals and organisations have contributed to the BBC's now world-orientated collection, but the contribution of Simms and Wade to the European part at least is still important and valuable.

Eric Simms, therefore, is well qualified to write this book. Not only is he in a particularly good position to relate the history of the development of wildlife sound recording in this country, which he does in highly readable fashion throughout, enlivening it with a wealth of autobiographical detail, but he has managed to combine it smoothly with much technical information and practical advice on field techniques derived from his personal experience. Most of this has been with monophonic recording, but he has, nevertheless, included a short chapter on stereophonic recording of wildlife sounds, much of it based on the published work of David Tombs and on experience acquired during an expedition to the Camargue with the present reviewer and Tombs, which he describes in detail. Although not comprehensive, it will serve as a useful introduction to those interested in trying this more complicated—but highly rewarding—area of wildlife sound recording.

While much of the book is concerned with recording animals in the wild, Simms reminds us in a chapter on recording animals in captivity that much has been achieved in this way, and that it still offers almost endless possibilities. Moreover, he does not neglect to discuss the wide range and nature of animal language nor to outline the avenues of research opened up by those

who record animal sounds. Finally, he concludes this well documented and illustrated—although perhaps oddly arranged—book with a useful section covering commercially published recordings, discographies, an international list of recordists (admittedly incomplete), sound libraries, and an extensive bibliography. Altogether a book that all persons interested in recording wildlife sounds, and many other naturalists too, will not want to be without.

JOHN F. BURTON

Sveriges Fåglar. Compiled and published by the Sveriges Ornitologiska Förening. Stockholm, 1978. 268 pages; many decorative drawings; many maps. Paperback, no price given.

Although the main text of this new checklist of Swedish birds is written wholly in Swedish, there is a most useful four-page 'note to foreign readers' in English, and there are clear distribution maps for every breeding species and an 18-page table summarising, by means of symbols, the status of every bird species recorded in Sweden up to 1975. Thus, it is perfectly easy for ornithologists who know no Swedish to make use of this book, and many will wish to own a copy for reference.

The breeding-distribution maps are not based on the country's ten-year atlas scheme (which will not be completed for several years), but, by using three grades of shading and three other symbols, they summarise present local knowledge within each of 29 geographical areas. In combination, the maps and the status table summarise an enormous amount of fascinating information.

Design is good and the book is attractive as well as being easy to use. It is helpful for reference—and pleasing for European uniformity—that the rapidly-becoming-familiar Voous sequence and nomenclature have been adopted.

J. T. R. SHARROCK

Greenshanks. By Desmond and Maimie Nethersole-Thompson. T. & A. D. Poyser, Berkhamsted, 1979. 275 pages; 4 colour plates and numerous drawings by Donald Watson; 19 monochrome plates by Eric Hosking and others. £8.80.

It must be an unique achievement to write two monographs on the same species within the space of 30 years, even more remarkable when the difficult nature of the subject, *Tringa nebularia* (what an apt specific name!), is considered. But physical obstacles have never daunted the Nethersole-Thompsons, as Desmond's other monographs testify.

His absorption in the Greenshank clearly springs from the challenge posed by finding its nest. But where the most persevering egg-collectors stopped at the achievement of discovery, DN-T proceeded to build up a tremendous dossier on the activities of 'his' birds from their arrival on the breeding grounds to their departure after nesting. The history of 300 nests found personally by the Nethersole-Thompson family is the basis of this pyramid.

The New Naturalist *The Greenshank* (1951 and long out of print) took the senior author more or less to the end of the Strathspey period which, with Caroline Nethersole-Thompson's observations, ran from about 1921 to 1950. The new book adds the fruit of 15 years in another area: a remote strath in northwest Sutherland. One of the interesting suggestions arising from the two studies is that there are distinct behavioural differences between the 'forest' Greenshanks of Strathspey and the 'moorland' birds of Sutherland. Over its world breeding range, the Greenshank is found predominantly in open northern coniferous forest, so it may be that in Scotland the moorland populations have adapted to a distinct habitat, rather as the red deer *Cervus elaphus* had to adapt when the Caledonian Forest virtually disappeared.

One of the chief differences, of course, for the Greenshank is the use of trees as perches and look-outs in forest, with only boulders as substitutes on moorland. But there may be subtler changes; for example, in the earlier book (p. 107) we read: 'Copulation during incubation is not actually such a rare event' (followed by references to other species), whereas in the new book (p. 116) we find: 'Greenshanks occasionally copulate during incubation but this seems to happen more frequently in forest populations.'

The lay-out of the two books is broadly similar. In this one, there are four introductory chapters in which we get to know the bird and the family team which has been studying it in Sutherland. The chapter on nest-hunting is compulsive reading for aficionados, with triumphs tempered by frank admissions of defeat.

The chapter on individual Greenshanks poses one of the problems that has faced the team throughout: they have relied on their acute powers of observation, often supported by

similarity of egg-types, to discriminate individual birds. Ringing has been attempted only since 1974, and, up to 1977, two females, one male and 56 chicks had been marked. One of the 1974 chicks returned as a breeding male in 1977, on a neighbouring territory. I am sure that fear for the safety of their birds has held the team back from ringing for so long and I honour and sympathise with them entirely. But, as the study seems to be continuing, I hope that, at least, more chick-ringing will be done because of its obvious dividends.

After an important chapter on groups, populations and density comes the biggest change from the first book: the chapter on voice. Instead of 13 pages and an appendix by Myles North, we now have 33 pages, liberally illustrated by sonogram charts on which Joan Hall-Craggs has written valuable comments. This may be rather heavy going for those not yet sonogram-minded, but it represents an obvious scientific advance in documentation of the Greenshank's extensive vocabulary.

Six chapters then explore comprehensively all aspects of the species' breeding biology and are followed by greatly expanded accounts of feeding habits and food, with contributions from Philip Burton and on pellet analyses by Denis King, of predators, and of distribution, numbers and movements. Derek Ratcliffe writes a beautifully lucid description of the breeding habitat (placed earlier, this would have saved the authors a good deal of repetitious detail) and there is a final chapter on progress which frankly lists—as well as those partly solved—the problems that remain to be cracked. Among these might be a study of Greenshanks on passage and in winter, at present hardly touched on.

Much more effort has been made in this book to look comparatively at the behaviour of other waders, but this aspect could be extended, and final paragraphs look forward to a possible study of the yellowshanks (*Tringa melanoleuca* and *T. flavipes*) in North America.

Thirty-one tables are tucked away after the bibliography and are followed by 11 appendices, which include lists of ectoparasites and endoparasites.

Finally, a word about illustrations. There are 19 black-and-white photographs, ranging from habitats to nest studies, some of them specially taken by Eric Hosking. There are four delectable coloured plates by Donald Watson, who also provides numerous chapter-head and other monochrome drawings. The whole complements the text most satisfyingly.

David Parmelee's preface gives a transatlantic endorsement to this notable admixture of science and dedication.

BRUCE CAMPBELL

Wildfowl of the World. By Eric Soothill and Peter Whitehead.

Blandford Press, Poole, 1978. 297 pages; 128 colour photos; line-drawings. £7.50.

Ducks, Geese and Swans of the World. By Paul A. Johnsgard.

University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln, USA, 1978. 404 pages; 59 colour photos, many maps and line-drawings by the author. \$35.00.

Waterfowl: ducks, geese and swans of the world. By Frank S. Todd.

Sea World Press, San Diego, USA, and Harcourt, Brace Jovanovitch, New York & London, 1979. 399 pages; 788 colour photos. £25.00.

The appearance of three books within a year with virtually the same title argues a very considerable interest in the group of birds concerned, though I might be thought biased. The three are very different in size, scope and price. No one of them completely satisfies the need for a single-volume, comprehensive work on the world's wildfowl, if only because the best illustrations and the best text are not found in the same book.

Soothill and Whitehead's book is much the cheapest, but, compared with the other two, this is very nearly its only recommendation. Each of 128 species of the world's wildfowl (including screamers) is given a double-page spread consisting of a slightly less than half-page colour photograph, a very small map and an abbreviated text under the headings of description, characteristics and behaviour, habitat, distribution, food, voice, display and breeding. The text variously takes up one to one-and-a-half pages, the remaining white space sometimes including a line-drawing, but just as often being left blank. The 20 species of wildfowl not included are clearly those which could not be photographed; a few are extinct, while most of the remainder are very rare or unknown in waterfowl collections, where virtually all the photographs were taken. On the whole, the photographs are excellent portrait shots of

standing or swimming birds, well reproduced to show details of plumage and texture. Females of dimorphic species are, however, rarely included. The text is very basic and contains many errors. The small maps are full of inaccuracies, not least when compared with the text on distribution. Very confusingly, where two subspecies are dealt with on a page, the map sometimes includes both, sometimes only one. Misprints, particularly of scientific names, are more than usually frequent, while two plates, of Northern and Australian Shovelers, have been transposed. The book also contains a highly selective list of 'Important wetlands for wildfowl', with, for example, six sites in Britain, but only four in the USA and none in South America.

Johnsgard, as befits a long-standing professional researcher on wildfowl, has produced a very comprehensive survey of the family, in a relatively standard handbook-type treatment. From one to five pages are devoted to each species, under headings of subspecies and range, measurements and weights, identification and field marks, habitat and foods, social behaviour, reproductive biology, status, relationships, and suggested reading. Very clear half- or full-page maps accompany each account. The author is strongest on social behaviour, long his specialist subject, and perhaps weakest on field identification. It is also a pity that his coverage of subspecies is usually restricted to the briefest remarks under range and description: some wildfowl subspecies, of for example Mallard and White-fronted and Brent Geese, have markedly differing habitats, food and breeding biology that are just not brought out. The book is, however, very generously and successfully illustrated with the author's own line drawings. Johnsgard's style may not be to everyone's taste, his use of light and shade is often inadequate, but the general effect is very striking, perhaps particularly in drawings depicting birds in flight. If some of the postures look strange, then, as the author states, the majority of the drawings are based on photographs. The result is therefore more true to life than many an 'artistic' representation. There are also 59 colour photographs, mainly showing portraits of captive birds. Many have been used before, in an earlier book by this author, and their colour is somewhat variable. It would have been nice to have had a more representative collection. As it is, they add rather little to the book except, presumably, to its price.

Todd uses the American definition of waterfowl to mean wildfowl, to which he adds the screamers. Here is published easily the finest, most complete collection of colour photographs of any group of birds, let alone wildfowl. And, staggeringly, 95% of them were taken by the author. Whilst the majority were taken in zoos, they are by no means restricted to portrait shots, for the birds are often 'doing something': displaying, feeding, preening, etc. In addition, there are many photographs taken in the wild, especially in South America and Alaska. Immatures, eclipse plumages and downy young are included for many species. The quality of the photographs, and their reproduction, is outstanding. Turning the pages one finds picture after picture to pause and marvel over; Frank Todd has combined portraiture with artistry of a high order. Every species—and practically every described race—of wildfowl is illustrated here, not excluding the few extinct species, for which museum specimens have been pictured. The generously sized square pages present an attractive format and there are some 50 full-page photographs. A designer has, however, been at work on the page layout, leaving photographs, captions and text juggled about as if no two pages should look the same. Many very tiny photographs have been used, right down to the size of an unenlarged colour slide, which one might not object to so much if there were not also often great areas of white space on the same pages. Whom do book designers intend to please with such ideas, except perhaps themselves? The text does not match the photographs in quality. After a couple of introductory chapters dealing with general characters and classification, there are generic and species accounts, written in a pleasant discursive style, but not attempting to be comprehensive. For some species, one can learn most important facts, but, for others, there are considerable gaps, though rather few actual errors. One major omission is the lack of any distribution maps. Short chapters at the end deal with keeping waterfowl in captivity (the author is curator of birds of a major North American zoo), and with man's relationship with wildfowl. There are two appendices entitled 'Concise reference guide to waterfowl', and 'Photographing waterfowl'. The first endeavours to condense into about 75 words the distribution, average weight, basic breeding biology and status in the wild and in captivity of each species. On the whole, it is not a success. The second appendix describes the author's equipment and approach to wildfowl photography: a master speaks.

And finally. If you want the most authoritative text, buy Johnsgard. If you want a superb collection of photographs, buy Todd. Better still, buy both. If you cannot afford either, save up until you can.

M. A. OGILVIE

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Emigration and bird-rings: bird-rings, winter visitors and passage migrants; island birds; ornithology

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Personalities: John Temple Lang

Miscellaneous photographs - Notes - News and comment

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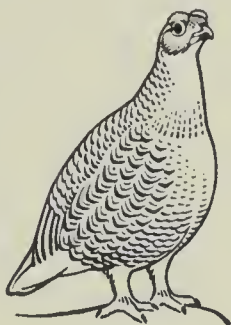
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British Birds

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Editorial

Periodically, we shall be devoting the major part of an entire issue to the birds and ornithology of a single geographical region. This number of *British Birds* is the first, and we felt it appropriate to start by featuring the closest neighbour to Britain: the island of Ireland. Although zoogeographically part of the British Isles, the avifauna of Ireland differs from that of Britain in many minor and some major respects. For this account of Ireland's birds, the political boundary between the 26 counties of the Republic of Ireland and the six counties of Northern Ireland, which is part of the United Kingdom, has been ignored; it is, however, relevant to the appraisal of Ireland's ornithological outlook and future, and the similarities and differences between the two areas are noted by Dr Raymond O'Connor in his paper (pages 85-92).

We aim with these special issues to paint a picture of a country or region which will be a valuable summary both for present-day ornithologists living elsewhere and for all ornithologists in the future. The impoverished breeding landbird avifauna of Ireland is well known, but the island's internationally important riches are often unknown to or overlooked by outsiders and perhaps not fully appreciated (in two senses) even by Irish birdwatchers. Of these riches, the breeding seabirds are discussed by Oscar Merne (pages 80-85) and the hordes of migrant and wintering waterfowl and waders, as well as the role of Ireland as a hard-weather haven for thrushes, are described by Clive Hutchinson (pages 72-80). Before these detailed papers, however, Roger Goodwillie and Joe Furphy give the essential background of climate and topography (pages 58-61) and Ken Preston provides his considered selection of a range of Irish bird sites (pages 62-71). It is also pleasing to feature the photographs of Richard Mills and include the profile of John Temple Lang.

We are most grateful to Clive Hutchinson and Ken Preston, who joined us to form a special editorial committee for this issue.

Topography and habitats of Ireland

Roger Goodwillie and J. S. Furphy



Ireland lies on the European continental shelf, directly north of Portugal and west of the Netherlands. It was separated from Britain in the early Postglacial period and today the channel between the two islands is 22 km wide in the north and 76 km in the south. The island is somewhat saucer-shaped, with the interior lying at an average height of 80 m above sea level, and a number of isolated hills and mountains around the margin. The mountains seldom rise above 600 m, but the proximity of the sea often adds to their apparent height. In the northwest, the mountains are composed of ancient acid rocks, and the oligotrophic lakes and peatlands harbour Ireland's only breeding Red-throated Divers* and occasional other northern species. The Antrim Plateau in the extreme northeast is composed of basalt overlying Cretaceous chalk and is covered by peatland. Nearby, there are the granitic Mourne Mountains, resembling to some extent their counterparts in the southeast, the Wicklow Mountains. Both have infertile soils and broad, rounded outlines, which contrast with the steep sandstone ridges of Munster. The mountains in this latter region include the Knockmealdowns and Macgillicuddy's Reeks and form a distinct province. They contain an abundance of plants and animals with southern affinities in Europe and also most of Ireland's oakwoods (*Quercus*). The highest peaks occur in the southwest, although the Wicklow Mountains form the largest area of upland in the country.

The Irish climate is markedly oceanic, and, although the country is at the same latitude as Labrador, its mean January temperature is generally above 4°C and surface waters seldom freeze for long periods. For this reason, Ireland is extremely important as a wintering area, and as a refuge for many birds forced westwards by hard-weather conditions over the Continent and Britain. Summer temperature is only 15°C, and this limits the range of insects on which more Continental bird species, such as the Quail, depend.

The air is always humid and the rainfall evenly spread throughout the year. Measurable rainfall occurs on half the days in the east of the country, and on two-thirds of them in the west. It is no wonder that peatland, the natural response of vegetation to waterlogging, covers 17 per cent of the

*The scientific names of birds appear in an appendix on pages 93-94.

land surface: the highest proportion of any of the natural vegetation associations. Blanket mire covers almost all mountain areas, as well as lowland parts of the west coast, while raised mire, which carries a similar vegetation of sedges (Cyperaceae), but with a higher proportion of *Sphagnum* mosses, is abundant in the north and centre.

The rain is carried by frontal depressions, which dominate the weather conditions through most of the year. They move eastwards across the Atlantic, sometimes in as little as 24 hours. Throughout the year, westerly winds prevail, and parts of the west coast experience 40 days of gales per year. Such conditions are conducive to the appearance close inshore of the pelagic shearwaters and other seabirds.



8. Small unnamed lough inland in Co. Cork on a 'soft day', June 1970 (J. T. R. Sharrock)

Practically all of Ireland has been glaciated at least once, resulting in a thick cover of till on the lowlands, and mountains that are characteristically carved into deep valleys and steep-walled corries, though their tops are often gently rounded. In the north, between Clew Bay and Strangford Lough, the lowland till is moulded into swarms of drumlins: low rounded hills that give a 'basket of eggs' topography. Where the till is derived from shales, the soil is particularly ill-drained and the fields covered by rushes *Juncus*. The inter-drumlin hollows are often lake- or marsh-filled. At Upper Lough Erne and Lough Oughter, a larger lake has flooded adjacent hollows. The resultant maze-like waterbody is chosen for winter feeding by Whooper Swans and diving ducks. Eskers, which are low, sandy ridges deposited by streams beneath thawing, retreating ice-sheets, are found winding across the central lowlands; their sediments are attractive both to Sand Martins and to suppliers of aggregate.

Beneath the glacial till in the centre of Ireland, Carboniferous limestone is the dominant rock. Indeed, covering 65% of the island, it is the largest area of this rock type in Europe. It rises into uplands in Fermanagh, Sligo and Clare, producing flat-topped hills with steep cliffs surrounding them.



9. Aerial view of Little Brosna, Co. Tipperary/Co. Offaly, March 1974 (Oscar J. Merne)

Extensive areas of bare, jointed rock, or pavement, also occur. In these areas, woods of ash *Fraxinus excelsior* cover some of the slopes, and there are grasslands rich in arctic-alpine herbs. The lowlands are dominated by permanent pasture, divided into small fields by hedges of hawthorn *Crataegus* or, west of the Shannon, by drystone walls. The lowlands provide rich grazing land for animals and birds, particularly in the eutrophic lakes and marshes. Seasonally flooded callows (flood plains) and turloughs (lakes) are especially important. Turloughs fill and drain through subterranean channels controlled by the level of the local watertable in the porous rock. Several of the larger ones, including many which were important bird haunts, have been drained. The same activity has altered considerable lengths of major and minor rivers, but to date the Shannon has survived unscathed. Like most of the midland rivers, it is partly confined by raised mires, and winds slowly through the landscape, falling only 15 m in 200 km. Frequently, it widens out into lake-like expanses, which in themselves are important wetlands. The Shannon Valley constitutes an important migration route for waders and wildfowl, as does the chain of lakes in Galway and Mayo: Loughs Corrib, Mask and Conn. Ireland's largest lake, Lough Neagh, lies in a natural, probably faulted, depression. It is undergoing a fairly rapid rate of eutrophication and in this it resembles most of the other lakes in agricultural parts of the country.

The coastline of the Irish mainland has a length of over 3,000 km, but is so indented that nowhere is more than 90 km from the sea. On the west, wave action has etched numerous cliffs and rocky islands, which are the headquarters of the large seabird populations, of the Chough and, in winter, the Barnacle Goose. Mudflats are few, except for the Fergus Estuary, Castlemaine Harbour and the very wader-rich Shannon Estuary.

The majority of the larger rivers debouch on the south and east coasts where, in the more sheltered conditions, there are many more estuarine mudflats, several threatened with invasion by cord-grass *Spartina*. Estuaries are often partially enclosed by shingle spits and include lagoonal marshes as well as tidal mud. In Wexford Harbour, reclamation has created the grasslands of the North and South Slobs, the premier haunt of the principal grey goose species, the Greenland Whitefront, and, formerly, of the Greylag. Northwards from Wicklow, there are again muddy estuaries, those of Dublin Bay, Dundalk Bay and Strangford Lough carrying exceptionally high densities of shorebirds.

Natural deciduous woodland formerly covered 90% of the land surface, but is now restricted to 1.5% of the country, surviving only in the poorest upland regions, behind tall estate walls or in tiny inaccessible areas in the lowlands. The treeline is approximately 150 m above sea level, but it may be that this height is controlled more by sheep and deer grazing than by climatic factors. The original breaking-up of the large tracts of forest probably caused the decline or disappearance of many woodland birds still widespread in Britain, such as the Redstart and Great Spotted Woodpecker. In the 19th century, much planting was undertaken by the owners of large lowland estates, and the country still benefits from their legacy of beech *Fagus sylvatica* and other trees. They also introduced sycamore *Acer pseudoplatanus*, a mixed blessing because of its tendency to spread, and the invasive rhododendron *Rhododendron ponticum*, which threatens the future of many natural woods. The last 40 years has seen extensive planting of North American and other exotic conifers in peaty and mountainous areas and today about 5% of the land surface is tree-covered. These new plantations are mostly in small blocks, the most extensive being in Galway, Wicklow, Fermanagh and Tyrone. In the first years after planting, they are significant nest sites for Hen Harriers, Grasshopper Warblers and Redpolls.

Irish landscapes are changing. The visitor realises that it is an agricultural land where the influence of man on the landscape is all-controlling. But the human population today is much less than it was 140 years ago. In 1840 there were more than twice the present number of inhabitants, and most lived by subsistence farming. The subsequent decline in numbers is unique in Europe and has led to a retreat of cultivation from marginal lands, allowing their poor soils to be recolonised by heath or mire communities. The outlines of old cultivation ridges can still be seen at up to 400 m above sea level and, in many areas, stone walls run functionless across mountains. In recent years, however, an increase of field size, particularly for tillage farming, has resulted in hedge clearance, and many peat areas have been cut for fuel or reclaimed. More significantly in the long term may be the human migration to the towns and the growth of large industrial complexes. It may seem paradoxical that, in a countryside whose main natural resource is highly productive agricultural land, over 70% of the population lives in towns and cities.

Irish bird sites

K. Preston



This list of 51 Irish ornithological sites is intended to give an indication of the types of habitat and species encountered at areas chosen for their variety and geographical distribution; it is not an attempt to catalogue the localities most important for conservation considerations. Consequently, the selection has been arbitrary and a number of important sites have been omitted, so that a representative cross-section of Irish habitats—with a few exceptions, all readily accessible to the visiting ornithologist—can be included.

It must be emphasised that certain features for which Ireland is ornithologically important cannot be readily assigned to definite sites, and other phenomena, such as the large-scale seabird passages for which Cape Clear Island has become famous, can be observed at a large number of sites. The vast hordes of Golden Plovers and Lapwings wintering in Ireland form, to a large degree, a mobile population moving from place to place; similarly, the huge flocks of thrushes and finches moving into the country ahead of hard weather in Europe cannot be associated with specific areas.

A perusal of the following list displays a heavy bias towards areas definable as wetlands. This arises from the country's international importance as a wintering ground and passage halt for large numbers of waders and wildfowl, the subject of a separate paper in this issue (pages 72-80). Also featuring prominently in the listing are seabird sites, which, in view of their international importance, are also described in more detail separately (see pages 80-85).

While it will be obvious that the following localities have much to offer the birdwatcher visiting Ireland in spring, autumn or winter, those coming in summer who are unattracted to seabird colonies may consider their interests neglected by the selection offered. The variety of species breeding in the country is substantially lower than in Britain and many as familiar there as woodpeckers, certain warblers, and some tits are very scarce or absent from Ireland as breeders and in many cases unrecorded or noted as vagrants at best. On the other hand, a few northern species, such as Red-throated Diver, Common Scoter and Red-necked Phalarope reach the southern limit of their breeding range here. While limited in variety, the country, particularly the western region, has something special to offer in

good stocks of Corncrakes, Black Guillemots, Rock Doves and Choughs. Some visitors may find interest in the distinctive Irish subspecies of certain species.

For those seeking further data on the localities, the most important sources of additional information are given in the following list. Few county avifaunas have been published, but those available (Hutchinson 1975, Merne 1974, Stapleton 1975, Wilde 1977) give a varying degree of attention to localities within their area. In addition, Sharrock (1976) mapped the breeding distribution of all nesting species, Hutchinson (1979) treated all

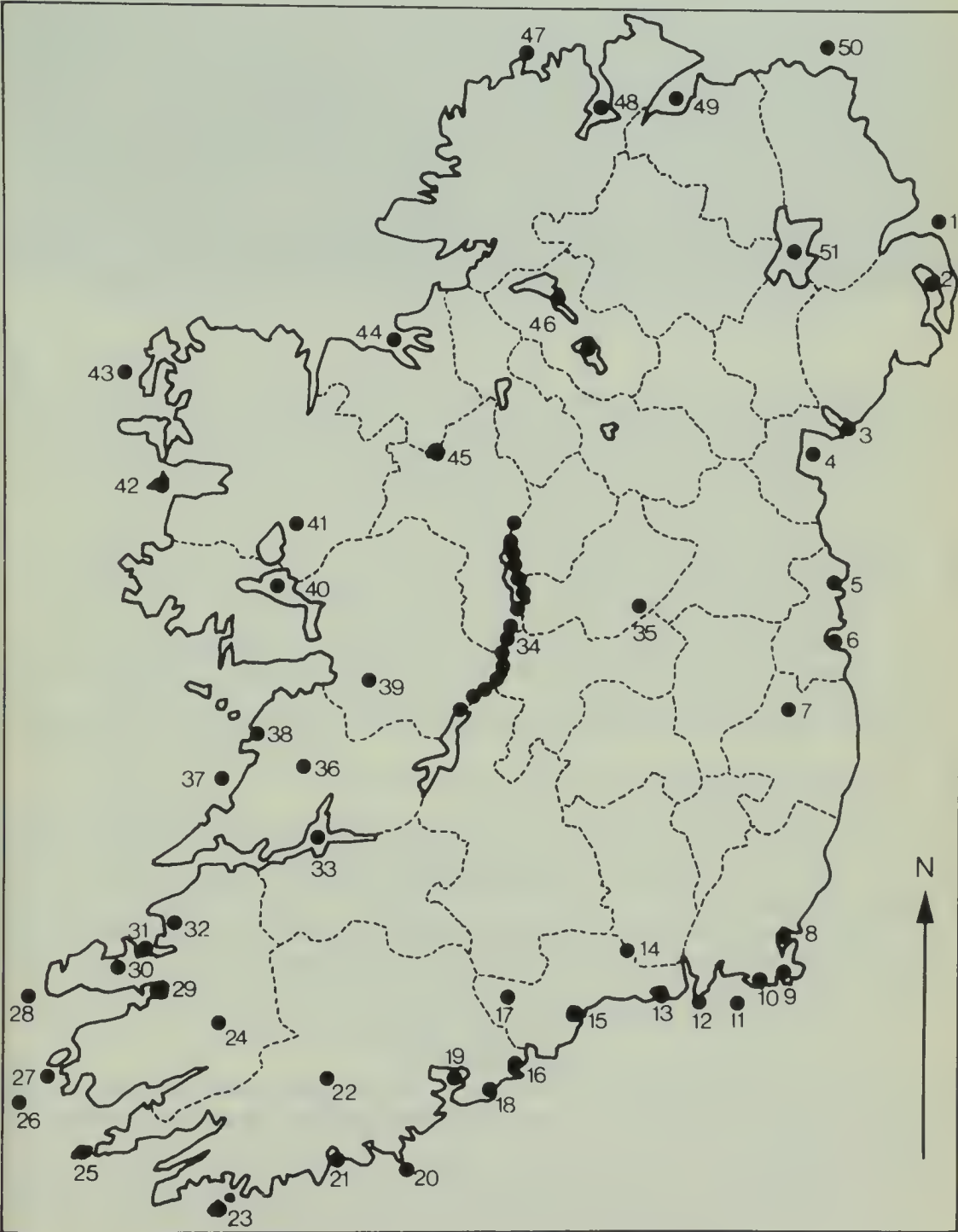


Fig. 1. Locations of 51 sites listed on pages 64-71

wetland areas of any importance and Cramp *et al.* (1974) gave an account of the seabird populations. Finally, *Some Irish Bird Haunts* (1975), a booklet issued by the Forest and Wildlife Service, Dublin, lists 106 localities with brief details.

1 Copeland Islands, Down

Group of three low islands, totalling 108 ha, at entrance to Belfast Lough. Bird observatory on Lighthouse Island, established 1959. McKee (1976).

Observatory work mainly concerned with ringing. Small colony of Manx Shearwaters; gull and tern colonies; breeding Eiders.

Day trips from Bangor and Donaghadee.

2 Strangford Lough, Down

Almost land-locked inlet of sea, 25 km in length, with numerous islands and extensive areas of mudflats. About seven refuges and sanctuaries within area.

Wildfowl and waders, particularly in autumn, with Brent Geese (up to 10,000) and Wigeons (20,000); wintering Whooper Swans (600) and Knots (30,000). Breeding gulls and terns.

Best areas in northern section from Newtownards south to Ardmillan on A22 and to Greyabbey on A20.

3 Carlingford Lough, Down/Louth

Fjord-type lough running southeast of Newry, with areas of mudflats in narrow channel to latter and around Greencastle at mouth.

Wintering grebes, wildfowl and waders, particularly Scaups and Long-tailed Ducks.

Roads run along shoreline on either side of lough.

4 Dundalk Bay, Louth

Broad, shallow bay, about 20 km wide, with very extensive areas of exposed sand and mud at low tide. Main high tide roosts at South Marsh and Lurgan Green. Part sanctuary.

Wintering and passage waders, notably Oystercatchers (10,000, with up to 20,000 in autumn) and Bar-tailed Godwits (7,000); few wildfowl.

Access via by-roads off T1 south of Dundalk.

5 Rogerstown Estuary, Dublin

Broad, muddy estuary, 3 km long, with areas of saltmarsh and sand spit at mouth; divided by railway causeway. Sanctuary. Hutchinson (1975), Rochford (1975).

Wintering wildfowl and waders, particularly Brent Geese and Wigeons; passage waders. Lambay Island, 5 km off mouth, is principal east-coast auk and Cormorant colony; also holds wintering Barnacle and Greylag Geese.

Access by by-roads off T1 5 km north of Swords; Lambay Island privately owned (see also page 81).

6 North Bull, Dublin

Low island of saltmarsh and sand-dunes with probably highest concentration of wildfowl and waders of any Irish wetland. Large resident population, but also acts as high-tide roost for much of Dublin Bay. Sanctuary. Best-documented wetland in Ireland. Jeffrey (1977), Kennedy (1953).

Very large number and variety of wintering wildfowl and waders, notably Brent Geese, Pintails, Knots, Bar-tailed Godwits and Grey Plovers; Avocets winter regularly; passage waders.

Connected to Dublin-Howth coast road by causeway.

7 Wicklow Mountains, Wicklow (plate 10)

Largest area of continuous high ground in Ireland, containing areas of open moorland, conifer forest and native oakwood. Several lakes, including artificial reservoir at Poulaphouca. Noonan (1975).

Typical upland species include Ring Ouzel, Red Grouse and Hen Harrier; wooded glens hold most of country's few breeding Wood Warblers and, occasionally, Redstarts. Wintering Greylag Geese near power station at Poulaphouca.

Numerous access roads and tracks.



10. Glenmalure, Wicklow Mountains, Co. Wicklow, 1967 (*David Scott*)

8 Wexford Harbour and Slobs, Wexford

Broad, sandy estuary of River Slaney, protected from sea by long sand spit terminating at Rosslare Point. Situated behind sea-walls on either side of harbour are North and South Slobs, totalling about 2,000 ha of farmed land reclaimed in 19th century. Area as a whole contains very diverse habitats, including unstable sandy islands. Part of North Slob is a refuge, with warden and facilities for visitors. Merne (1974).

Very large number and variety of wintering wildfowl and waders includes Greenland White-fronted Geese (5,200), Pintails (900), Bewick's Swans (700) and Black-tailed Godwits (1,200); passage waders include up to 100 Spotted Redshanks; breeding gulls and terns in harbour.

North Slob Refuge and information centre signposted from Wexford on L29.

9 Lady's Island Lake, Wexford

Shallow lagoon, separated from sea by shingle bank, with low island 1 km long connected to land by causeway. Merne (1974).

Wintering ducks and swans; good variety of passage waders in autumn; breeding gulls and terns on shingle bank.

Access south of Tagoat off T8.

10 Tacumshin Lake, Wexford (plate 11)

Tidal lagoon behind shingle bank and dunes with variable extent of saltmarsh and mudflats depending on state of flooding; reedbeds at White Hole. Western end most productive. Merne (1974).

Wintering wildfowl include Brent Geese and Scaups; waders in autumn; large Herring Gull breeding colony. White Hole attracts Bewick's Swans and Ruffs.

Access via by-roads south of Tomhaggard off L29.

11 Saltee Islands, Wexford

Two uninhabited islands of 86 and 40 ha off Kilmore Quay. Only large seabird colony in southeastern Ireland. Site of former bird observatory (1950-63). Sanctuary. Perry & Warburton (1977), Roche & Merne (1977), Ruttledge (1963). See also page 81.

Breeding seabirds, especially Gannets, Cormorants, Shags, Kittiwakes and auks. Noted for large spring and autumn passage movements and vagrants.

Access by boat from Kilmore Quay.



11. Aerial view of Tacumshin Lake, Co. Wexford, April 1973 (Oscar J. Merne)

12 Hook Head, Wexford

Long, exposed promontory, with low rocky cliffs and lighthouse. Merne (1974).

Best sea-watching point on southeast coast and most easterly regular breeding haunt of Choughs on south coast. Outstanding mainland point for migrants and vagrants.

Road from Fethard to tip of head.

13 Tramore Bay, Waterford

Large area of saltmarsh and mudflats behind sand dunes holding highest concentration of wildfowl in Waterford.

Wintering wildfowl, particularly Brent Geese; notable for spring passage of Grey Plovers.

Access by various roads from Tramore.

14 Coolfin Marshes, Waterford

Callows and marshes beside River Suir near Portlaw. Sanctuary.

About 200 Greylag Geese winter; also ducks and swans.

Beside L26 at junction for Portlaw.

15 Dungarvan Bay, Waterford

Broad, circular bay, bisected by sand spit inside which are areas of saltmarsh and mudflats and outside extensive sandflats with *Zostera* beds.

Waders include godwits, Grey Plovers, Oystercatchers and Knots; most westerly Brent Goose haunt on south coast.

Various roads from Dungarvan give access to shore.

16 Ballymacoda, Cork

Estuary of Womanagh River, with saltmarsh and mudflats, surrounded by marshy fields; separated from Pilmore Strand by sand spit. Smiddy (1977).

Large concentration of wildfowl and waders for size, including Golden Plovers (up to 13,000), Lapwings (8,000) and Black-tailed Godwits.

Various by-roads give access to shore.

17 Lismore Callows, Waterford

Callows beside River Blackwater. Number of birds dependent on state of flooding, with few present when dry.

Good numbers of Wigeons and Black-tailed Godwits; smaller numbers of swans and ducks. Beside T30 about 5 km west of Lismore.

18 Ballycotton, Cork

Complex area consisting of large intertidal strand, lagoon with reedbeds behind shingle bank, and muddy pools. Gardens and cover near village produce migrants.

Good variety of wintering wildfowl and waders in medium numbers; important for spring and autumn passage waders and vagrants.

Main access road signposted 'strand' 1 km south of Shanagarry.

19 Cork Harbour, Cork

Extensive estuary of River Lee and various small rivers, with large variety of habitats and numerous areas of ornithological interest. Best haunts are around Glanmire, Carrigaline, Rostellan, and channel behind Great Island.

As a whole, contains large numbers of wintering wildfowl, waders and gulls, notably grebes, Shelducks and Black-tailed Godwits. Passage waders occur in good numbers at various points, particularly in the Carrigaline and Glanmire/Little Island areas.

Most areas readily accessible.

20 Old Head of Kinsale, Cork

Rugged headland, 5 km in length, with cliffs and stack.

One of the best mainland sea-watch points; also productive during spring and autumn passerine migration. Largest Cork mainland seabird colony on western side, 1.5 km from tip, containing Guillemots, Razorbills and Kittiwakes. Bays attract wintering divers.

Signposted from L42 southwest of Kinsale.

21 Clonakilty Bay, Cork

Sandy estuary with twin inlets and several reed-fringed pools behind causeways.

Wintering waders, particularly Black-tailed Godwits, and small number of ducks; passage waders in good numbers. Large colony of Grey Herons south of Clonakilty.

Road from Clonakilty to Inchydoney runs along edge of area.

22 The Gearagh, Cork

Artificially flooded woodland area with marshy scrubland at western end. Widely fluctuating water level; occasionally dry except for pools and courses of old streams.

Varying winter populations of ducks, swans and plovers, with much movement to and from reservoir east of Macroom.

T64 along northern edge; by-roads on southern side more productive at times.

23 Cape Clear Island, Cork (plate 14)

Inhabited island of 630 ha with high cliffs and rocky shore, freshwater lake and three bogs; few trees. Most southwesterly land in British Isles, apart from the Fastnet Rock. Bird observatory established 1959. Sharrock (1973).

Famous for large autumn seabird movements, particularly Great Shearwaters, Sooty Shearwaters and skuas. Lacks large-scale passerine movements, but many rare migrants and vagrants. Breeding Black Guillemots, Choughs, and small seabird colonies.

Regular mail-boat service from Baltimore, and day-trips from Schull in summer.

24 Killarney, Kerry

Three lakes with wooded islands surrounded by highest mountains in Ireland; extensive areas of native oak and mixed woodland and conifer plantations frequented by red *Cervus elaphus* and sika deer *C. nippon*. Part National Park. Batten (1976).

Ducks wintering on lakes include up to 2,000 Tufted Ducks and 900 Poehards. Good area for breeding woodland and mountain species.

Adjoins Killarney town.

25 Dursey Island and Bull Rock, Cork

Exposed, hilly, inhabited island off Beara Peninsula, with very restricted cover. Recent observations suggest similar passage species and sea-watching to Cape Clear Island. Precipitous Bull Rock lies some 4 km to west. Evans & Lovegrove (1974).

Dursey: spring and autumn migrants and vagrants; large-scale sea passages. Bull Rock: breeding seabirds include Gannet colony of 1,500 pairs and Storm Petrels.

Access to Dursey by cable-car from mainland; accommodation difficult to obtain. Bull Rock extremely difficult of access and rarely visited.

26 The Skelligs, Kerry (plate 13)

Three precipitous rocks about 12 km west of Bolus Head. Skellig Michael, or Great Skellig, 18 ha in area, rises to 215 m above sea level and, in addition to a lighthouse, has famous early monastic remains. Little Skellig is a sanctuary. Evans & Lovegrove (1974), Lavelle (1976). See also pages 82-83.

Breeding seabirds on Skellig Michael include Manx Shearwaters, Storm Petrels and Puffins, while Little Skellig has Kittiwakes and Guillemots, in addition to Ireland's largest Gannet colony.

Day-trips to Skellig Michael from Ballinskelligs and Portmagee; landing on Little Skellig extremely difficult and dangerous.

27 Puffin Island, Kerry

Long, narrow, grassy, uninhabited island on northern side of St Finan's Bay. Evans & Lovegrove (1974). See also page 83.

Large breeding population of Manx Shearwaters and Storm Petrels; also about 7,000 pairs of Puffins.

Nearest fishing village is Portmagee.

28 Blasket Islands, Kerry

Group of exposed islands and rocks, famous for huge seabird colonies and literary associations, lying 5-10 km west of Slea Head. Evans & Lovegrove (1974). See also pages 83-84.

Largest seabird colonies are on Inishtearaght, Inishvickillane and Inishnabro, most notably Manx Shearwaters, Storm Petrels, Razorbills and Puffins. Beginish holds most southerly wintering Barnacle Geese in Ireland.

Access very difficult, except to Great Blasket, which has only small number of birds.

29 Castlemaine Harbour, Kerry

Extensive estuary with very large areas of saltmarsh, mudflats and *Zostera* beds behind sand spits. Part sanctuary. Large size makes watching difficult.

Large numbers of wintering wildfowl and waders include Brent Geese (4,000), Wigeons (7,000), Pintails (2,000) and Shovelers (900); several hundred Common Scoters winter off Inch on northern shore.

L103 runs parallel to north shore, giving access at various points.

30 Lough Gill, Kerry

Shallow lake with reedbeds behind sand dunes at Brandon Bay. Nearby Brandon Point is good sea-watch point.

Wintering ducks and swans in good numbers, notably Teals, Shovelers and Gadwalls.

Signposted from Castlegregory.

31 Tralee Bay, Kerry

Bay with areas of saltmarsh, mudflats and *Zostera* beds. Main haunts are behind Derrymore Island and Bannow Harbour.

Wintering waders and wildfowl, particularly Wigeons (4,500) and Brent Geese (3,200); several hundred Common Scoters in outer bay.

T68 west from Tralee passes along south shore; Bannow Harbour on northern side of bay.

32 Akeragh Lough, Kerry (plate 12)

Brackish lagoons behind sand dunes at Ballyheigue, subject to fluctuating water-level. Many waders move to Black Rock outside dunes when disturbed.



12. Aerial view of Akeragh Lough and Ballyheige Bay, Co. Kerry, February 1975 (*Oscar J. Merne*)

Number of birds dependent on state of flooding; mainly notable for passage and vagrant waders, especially Nearctic species.

Access by track running south from car park at Ballyheigue.

33 Shannon Estuary, Clare/Limerick/Kerry

A vast area, stretching over 75 km from Limerick city to sea, with enormous areas of mudflats at low tide and large variety of other habitats including polderland, saltmarsh and islands. Best areas are Poulhasserry and Clonderlaw Bays and Fergus Estuary on northern side; Aughinish Island, Tarbert and Ballylongford Bays on south. Stapleton (1975).

Very large numbers of waders and wildfowl, but widely scattered. Best single area is Fergus Estuary, with up to 16,000 Black-tailed Godwits in spring and up to 33,000 Dunlins in winter.

Most areas reasonably accessible from roads around estuary; best time one hour either side of high tide.

34 River Shannon (plate 9)

Longest river in British Isles, flowing 346 km through several lakes to head of estuary at Limerick city. Winter flooding of land beside banks provides extensive habitat for wildfowl. Generally, most important areas between Portumna and Lanesborough including Rivers Suck and Brosna. Several sanctuaries.

Wintering ducks and geese; also huge flocks of Golden Plovers and Lapwings. Junction of Little Brosna River with Shannon, south of Banagher, is best single area, holding up to 14,000 Wigeons in spring and 2,000 Black-tailed Godwits, 2,000 Teals and 300 White-fronted Geese in winter.

Access is generally difficult and necessitates much walking.

35 Westmeath Lakes, Westmeath

Complex of shallow lakes, up to 1,400 ha in extent, on limestone. Of varying ornithological significance, the most productive being Loughs Derravaragh, Owel and Iron.

Derravaragh: diving ducks, particularly Pochards in autumn (6,000), and Coots (3,000); small numbers of waders on spring and autumn passage. Owel: up to 2,000 Shovelers in early winter. Iron: wintering flock of 200 White-fronted Geese.

Access by various roads and tracks.

36 Ballyallia Lake, Clare

Shallow lake of about 35 ha on limestone, with very high concentration of wildfowl for its limited size. Sanctuary.

Wintering wildfowl, notably Wigeons (3,000), Shovelers (500) and Gadwalls (180). Breeding Great Crested Grebes.

Left off T11 about 3 km north of Ennis.

37 Mutton Island, Clare

Low, exposed island of 74 ha lying 1.5 km off mainland west of Quilty.

Third largest flock of wintering Barnacle Geese in Ireland. Some breeding seabirds. Liscannor Bay to north has wintering flock of Common Scoters.

Access by boat from Tromro Point near Quilty.

38 Cliffs of Moher, Clare

Sheer cliffs, reaching height of 230 m, facing Atlantic Ocean for 8 km north of Liscannor.

Large seabird colonies include Kittiwakes, Razorbills, Guillemots and Puffins.

Signposted from Liscannor.

39 Rahasane, Galway

Largest extant turlough in Ireland, situated on Dunkellin River between Craughwell and Clarinbridge. When fully flooded, measures 3 km by 1 km.

Wintering ducks, geese and swans; numbers fluctuate considerably depending on water-level. Small numbers of waders, but occasionally very large flocks of Golden Plovers and Lapwings.

Access road off T21 1.5 km north of Craughwell.

40 Lough Corrib, Galway

Large, irregularly shaped lake, 35 km in length, in two basins, with numerous islands and large area of marsh at southern end. Whilde (1977).

Main ornithological significance is autumn gathering of up to 22,000 Pochards and large number of Coots (11,600) mostly confined to southern end. Large population of breeding gulls.

Numerous roads off T40 and T77 approach shore, but size makes watching difficult.

41 Lough Carra, Mayo

Very shallow lake of 1,500 ha on limestone; surrounded by reedbeds.

Wintering wildfowl include high numbers of Mallards and Shovelers; large breeding population of Mallards. Breeding Common and Black-headed Gulls.

T40 passes west of lake.

42 Clare Island, Mayo

Island of exposed, treeless, undulating moorland, 1,400 ha in area, off Clew Bay; rises to nearly 500 m, with high cliffs. Intensive studies in early 1900s resulted in the 68-part Clare Island Survey. Ussher (1912), Whilde (1977). See also page 84.

Seabird colonies, particularly Razorbills, Guillemots and Kittiwakes. Breeding Corncrakes, Choughs and Corn Buntings.

Access by boat from Roanah Quay, west of Louisborough.

43 Inishkea Islands, Mayo

Two low-lying, exposed, uninhabited islands situated 4 km west of Mullet Peninsula. Sanctuary. Cabot (1965).

Up to 60% of Irish winter population of Barnacle Geese (2,900). Small number of breeding seabirds.

Access by boat from Fallmore.

44 Sligo Bay, Sligo

Three estuaries discharge into Sligo Bay, which has extensive areas of mudflats holding relatively few birds. Part reserve.

Barnacle Goose flock near Lissadell in Drumcliffe Bay; Cummeen Strand holds large Brent Goose flock in early winter. Inishmurray, lying 9 km north of bay, is most southerly Eider breeding site; wintering Barnacle Geese.

Bay readily accessible by various roads from Sligo; Inishmurray by boat from Grange or Streedagh.

45 Lough Gara, Sligo/Roscommon

Basically two lakes connected by narrow channel; an important archaeological site. Part sanctuary. Whilde (1977).

Good number of wintering ducks and swans; one of the largest flocks of White-fronted Geese outside Wexford. Breeding gulls, particularly Lesser Black-backed Gulls.

Access off L133 7 km west of Boyle.

46 Lough Erne, Fermanagh

Large lake consisting of upper and lower basins in flooded drumlin country, with highly indented shoreline and maze of wooded islands. Reserve at Castle Cauldwell. Ferguson (1971).

Main Irish breeding site of Common Scoter; breeding gulls and terns. Small winter population of ducks, but good numbers of grebes and Whooper Swans.

Situated north and south of Enniskillen.

47 Horn Head, Donegal

Perhaps the finest headland in Ireland, with sheer cliffs rising to 200 m.

Breeding seabirds include country's largest Razorbill colony; also Puffins and Guillemots.

Off T72 6.5 km northwest of Dunfanaghy.

48 Lough Swilly, Donegal

Glaciated sea lough, about 50 km in length, with extensive mudflats in southern portion and large reedbeds at Inch Lough. Best localities are at Inch and Blanket Nook. Part sanctuary.

Large autumn arrivals of Whooper Swans (up to 1,500); wintering Greylag Geese and wildfowl, but relatively few waders.

Access off T73/T74 south of Buncrana.

49 Lough Foyle, Donegal/Derry

Broad, triangular sea lough, with narrow inlet to sea, containing extensive mudflats. Best areas between Muff and Roe estuary on southern and eastern sides.

Large autumn concentrations of Wigeons and other waterfowl and waders.

Access off A2 east of Derry.

50 Rathlin Island, Antrim

Inhabited island, about 1,400 ha in extent, lying 4 km off Antrim coast, with high cliffs, offshore stacks and several lakes. Port (1959), Bond (1978). See also page 84.

Large seabird colonies, notably Kittiwakes, Razorbills and Guillemots. Breeding Eiders and Choughs.

Access by boat from Ballycastle.

51 Lough Neagh and Lough Beg

Largest freshwater lake in British Isles, about 250 km² in area, with large variety of surrounding habitat and several islands. Various reserves around perimeter. Lough Beg is 2 km to north on River Bann. D'Arcy (1978).

Six species of ducks (Teal, Pintail, Shoveler, Tufted, Pochard and Goldeneye) and both wild swans have wintering populations of international importance. Breeding Great Crested Grebes, Mute Swans and ducks, including over 1,000 pairs of Tufted Ducks. Lough Beg particularly attractive to passage and vagrant waders.

Access at numerous points around lake; west side least productive.

Ireland's winter visitors and passage migrants

C. D. Hutchinson



As a result of the small size of the country, its position on the western fringe of the European land-mass, its relatively uniform climate and the scarcity of deciduous woodland, Ireland's breeding avifauna is comparatively impoverished. A glance at *The Atlas* (Sharrock 1976) indicates that there are no important breeding bird populations apart from the seabirds discussed elsewhere in this issue and a handful of species, such as the Corncrake, the Rock Dove and the Chough, for which Ireland is a westerly outpost. In contrast, the Irish wintering avifauna is quite rich and includes a number of species for which the country is a critical part of their range.

The geographical location, mild climate and abundance of wetland habitat are the main reasons for Ireland's importance as a wintering area and passage halt for birds breeding farther north. Ireland, together with Scotland, is the first landfall for many birds breeding in Iceland, Greenland and Arctic Canada which winter in Europe. Some of these, such as Canadian Brent Geese and Icelandic Whooper Swans, Golden Plovers and Black-tailed Godwits, winter in large numbers. Others, such as many of the Redshanks, Knots and other waders, move on, to winter in England or farther south. A few species breeding to the northwest even miss the country altogether: Greylag Geese and Pink-footed Geese are surprisingly scarce in Ireland. Although this northwesterly component is very important to the Irish avifauna, it should not cloud the existence of a large wintering and passage population of waterfowl and passerines with origins in Scandinavia, northern USSR and, to a lesser extent, central Europe. These are wildfowl and waders which require ice-free wetlands, and thrushes and finches which come to feed in the soft soil of the damp fields or on the huge crops of berries, particularly haws, that are a feature of the countryside in winter. Many of the waterfowl—Teal and Snipe, for example—have a preference for marshes and small lakes which freeze over at higher air temperatures than larger lakes and estuaries. In all winters, there are large populations of species with a northwesterly origin, but in exceptionally hard winters the numbers increase dramatically as ducks, waders and thrushes flock across the Irish Sea to find a milder climate. These flocks tend to fluctuate greatly, the birds moving off rapidly when the temperature rises again. There are therefore three main sources for Ireland's winter and

passage visitors: (1) the northwest, (2) the northeast and east, and (3) central and western Europe, particularly in cold weather.

Wintering birds

Swans, geese and ducks

The estimated midwinter populations of Ireland's commoner wildfowl species are shown in table 1, together with an indication of their European significance. The table illustrates Ireland's importance for wild swans, three species of goose and several migratory duck species. It also shows that the commonest goose and duck in western Europe—the Greylag Goose and the Mallard—are relatively less common in Ireland than in most other countries.

For White-fronted Geese and Bewick's Swans, Ireland is of especial importance. The subspecies which winter in Ireland are both scarce in international terms: there are some 12,000-15,000 White-fronted Geese of the Greenland race *A. a. flavirostris* and 8,000 Bewick's Swans of the nominate race in the world today. Ireland holds about 70% of the former and 25% of the latter in winter. The White-fronted Goose population is now dependent to an alarming extent on the Wexford Slobs, where 5,000-7,000 winter. Another 2,000-4,000 are scattered over callows (flooded water meadows), bogs and other wetlands throughout the midlands and west of the country. Only a handful of these are in concentrations of over 150 birds and numbers at every site have declined during the last 25 years. The extent of the real decline in the total population is a matter of some doubt, since numbers have increased in Scotland in this period (Ogilvie 1978) and systematic counts were not made at the Wexford Slobs until the mid 1960s, but there has certainly been a drastic reduction in numbers at the traditional bogs and marshes of the west and midlands. The Wexford concentration is vitally important as a result. Part of the North Slob is a Forest and Wildlife Service/Irish Wildbird Conservancy reserve, but the area involved is only 154 ha, about 8% of the total area of the two slobs. With Irish land prices substantially higher than those in Britain, and agriculture becoming increasingly intensive, there must be some concern about the long-term future of both slobs and geese.

The Bewick's Swans are far less vulnerable for, while there is now a flock of up to 500 on the Wexford Slobs, there are flocks scattered at a number of turloughs and callows in the Shannon Valley, the midlands and at Lough Neagh and Lough Beg in Northern Ireland. This species appears to be extremely sensitive to cold weather. Following cold spells in Britain, flocks generally arrive on the Wicklow coast in winter: on many occasions, parties have been seen flying in from the sea.

Although Whooper Swans, Brent Geese and Barnacle Geese have much larger world populations than either the Greenland White-fronted Goose or the Bewick's Swan, Ireland is of importance as a wintering area for certain populations of each. Whooper Swans outnumber Bewick's Swans in Ireland by two or three to one, and ringing results indicate that most, if not all, originate in Iceland. Singles and pairs have summered in Ireland on many occasions and a Whooper hybridised with a Mute Swan in 1973,

hatching five eggs. Unfortunately, none of the cygnets survived longer than a month (Preston 1974).

The most numerous goose in Ireland is now the Brent Goose, numbers of which fluctuate considerably from year to year but which reached 16,000 in 1973/74 (Hutchinson 1979). Ireland has the only European winter population of Nearctic-breeding Brent Geese. Neck-banding in Arctic Canada has shown that many of the Irish winterers breed on the Queen Elizabeth Islands in northern Canada, an area much farther west than formerly thought. Presumably others wintering in Ireland come from Greenland. The Irish birds are of interest mainly as the European representatives of a population which winters commonly on the Atlantic coast of North America and is not in any great danger.

Some 25% of the Greenland population of Barnacle Geese winter on the west coast of Ireland. The population dynamics of the largest concentration have been studied for many years and breeding success has been shown to be much lower than for birds wintering in Scotland (Cabot & West 1973). It has been suggested that the Irish winterers may breed in a different part of Greenland from the Scottish ones or, alternatively, that the availability of food on the islands of the western seaboard limits breeding success. As with the Brent Goose, shooting is prohibited and there is evidence from a census in 1978 that the population had increased by 36% since 1973 (Hutchinson 1979).

Table 1. Estimated Irish winter population and percentage of northwest European winter population of certain wildfowl species

Sources: Atkinson-Willes (1976) and Hutchinson (1979)

Species	Irish winter population	% of NW European population
Mute Swan <i>Cygnus olor</i>	5,000-6,000	?
Bewick's Swan <i>C. columbianus</i>	2,000	25%
Whooper Swan <i>C. cygnus</i>	4,000-6,000	? Most of Icelandic population
White-fronted Goose <i>Anser albifrons</i>	7,000-10,000	70% of Greenland race
Greylag Goose <i>A. anser</i>	750-1,000	1% of Icelandic population
Barnacle Goose <i>Branta leucopsis</i>	4,000-5,750	25% of Greenland population
Brent Goose <i>B. bernicla</i>	12,000-16,000	Only winter population in Europe of Greenland and Canadian origin
Shelduck <i>Tadorna tadorna</i>	6,500-8,500	8%
Wigeon <i>Anas penelope</i>	90,000-120,000	20%
Teal <i>A. crecca</i>	30,000-50,000	25%
Mallard <i>A. platyrhynchos</i>	20,000-50,000	3%
Pintail <i>A. acuta</i>	3,000-7,000	10%
Shoveler <i>A. clypeata</i>	4,000-8,000	20%
Pochard <i>Aythya ferina</i>	30,000-65,000	20%
Tufted Duck <i>A. fuligula</i>	30,000-50,000	8%
Goldeneye <i>Bucephala clangula</i>	4,000-8,000	4%
Red-breasted Merganser <i>Mergus serrator</i>	2,000-4,000	8%

A glance at table 1 highlights four significant duck populations: those of Wigeon, Teal, Shoveler and Pochard. Perhaps the Wigeon is the most typical duck of an Irish estuary, callow or turlough. Great rafts congregate on the Shannon Estuary and on the tributaries of the Shannon, often, in the latter area, associated with a few White-fronted Geese, providing one of the wildest and most spectacular ornithological sights in the country. Drainage and land reclamation have removed many thousands of hectares of habitat during the past two decades, but over 100,000 Wigeons still winter in the country. Although many come from Scandinavia and Russia, a large proportion of the Icelandic population winters in Ireland.

The Teal is less numerous but is the duck species most sensitive to severe drops in temperature. Evidence from ringing recoveries in 1963 and from counts in 1973 indicate the importance of Ireland as a refuge in cold spells. The largest concentrations are found in certain estuaries and shallow harbours. Shovelers are not numerous in Ireland, but they are relatively common in European terms and one lake in the midlands supports a flock of up to 2,000 in late autumn. Some occur on the coast, but most winter on lakes and callows inland. As with the Wigeon, it appears that a large proportion of Irish wintering Shovelers comes from Iceland. The last of these four species, the Pochard, does not breed in Iceland at all, and ringing results indicate a remarkably diverse origin from many parts of eastern and central Europe (Stronach in press). Counts in autumn have shown large numbers present at Lough Corrib in Co. Galway (up to 22,000) and Lough Derravaragh in Co. Westmeath (up to 6,000), but these disperse in late autumn. Some may move to Lough Neagh where, in five winters of censuses in the 1960s, the peak count in four years varied between 11,200 and 14,500 and in the fifth year was 37,600. Unfortunately, it has not been possible for counts to be carried out at Lough Neagh since January 1969.

Non-coastal waders

In the spate of co-operative waterfowl studies which have produced so much information about the range and population size of so many European species in the past decade and a half, those waders which spend most of their lives away from the littoral have been relatively understudied. We know a good deal about the movements of these species, for most of them are quarry species for hunters, but we know very little about their total numbers. There has recently been an effort to quantify the numbers of Golden Plovers wintering in Britain, but not even a reasonable estimate can be given of the numbers wintering in Ireland. The position is the same with Lapwing, Snipe, Woodcock and Curlew.

What is known is that Ireland has numerous flocks of Lapwings and Golden Plovers scattered across the country, with particularly large concentrations in the Shannon Valley. There are probably more than 200,000 of each species in the country in any winter, and numbers could be far in excess of this. Most Irish-wintering Lapwings breed in northern England, central Scotland, Scandinavia, Belgium, the Netherlands and Germany, but in particularly hard weather there is massive immigration of those which normally winter in Britain and on the Continent. In contrast, most of

Ireland's wintering Golden Plovers appear to be Icelandic-breeders and appear not to be so responsive to cold weather.

Snipe and Woodcock are both extremely numerous, as increasing numbers of shooting tourists can testify, but we know relatively little of their numbers. Both species occur in much larger numbers in cold weather. Curlews are also numerous, with an estimated winter population somewhere between 50,000 and 150,000. Since most occur away from estuaries, it is impossible to be more precise than this about numbers. Many Scottish, northern English and Scandinavian bred Curlews winter in Ireland and it seems likely that many Irish breeders remain to winter as well.

Unfortunately, there is little real likelihood of our being able to quantify more accurately the numbers of any of these species wintering in Ireland. They are all so numerous and occur in such a diversity of habitat (from marshes through estuaries to open pasture for the two plovers and the Curlew) that a census is impossible for the small band of Irish ornithologists.

Coastal waders

As in Britain, there has been an upsurge of interest in studies of waders since the late 1960s. Much of this interest was channelled into counts at wetlands, of which virtually none had been made for waders before 1970, and a large proportion of the developing enthusiasm for ringing was directed at catching these birds. Now, we have a reasonably good knowledge of the winter numbers of most species, but the ringing effort has been hampered by government restrictions which render it unlikely that cannon-netting or rock-netting will be permitted in the foreseeable future. The obvious resemblance of cannon-netting equipment to a mortar explains the prohibition.

The most numerous coastal waders wintering in Ireland, as in western Europe generally, are Dunlin and, until recently, Knot. Although the numbers of Dunlins (in excess of 100,000) are high in Irish terms, they represent less than 10% of those wintering on the west European seaboard. The Knot numbers represent a similar proportion, but they occur at only a handful of estuaries in large flocks and numbers appear to have declined over the past decade, with several estuaries where smaller flocks occurred being abandoned.

In the European context, Ireland is much more important for four wader species which occur in considerably lower numbers than Dunlin and Knot. These are Ringed Plover, Sanderling, Black-tailed Godwit and Bar-tailed Godwit. The first two species winter in scattered flocks on beaches around Ireland, but the largest numbers are on the windswept strands of the west coast. Since they prefer the less accessible beaches, we have as yet only the broadest of estimates of wintering numbers and we know little of their origins. But the numbers appear to be very significant, with 25% of Europe's Ringed Plovers and 20% of the Sanderlings.

The two godwits also occur in very significant numbers, though not usually together. Ireland has long been known as a major wintering area for Black-tailed Godwits, most of the south coast estuaries having sizeable

Table 2. Estimated winter population and percentage of west European winter population of certain wader species

Sources: Hutchinson (1979) and Prater (1976)

Species	Irish winter population	% of W European population
Oystercatcher <i>Haematopus ostralegus</i>	30,000-35,000	16%
Ringed Plover <i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>	5,000-10,000	25%
Golden Plover <i>Pluvialis dominica</i>	200,000+	?
Grey Plover <i>P. squatarola</i>	750-1,500	8%
Lapwing <i>Vanellus vanellus</i>	250,000+	?
Knot <i>Calidris canutus</i>	25,000-60,000	10%
Sanderling <i>C. alba</i>	2,000+	20%
Dunlin <i>C. alpina</i>	100,000-130,000	10%
Black-tailed Godwit <i>Limosa limosa</i>	8,000-10,000	18%
Bar-tailed Godwit <i>L. lapponica</i>	16,000-20,000	18%
Curlew <i>Numenius arquata</i>	50,000-150,000	?
Redshank <i>Tringa totanus</i>	11,000-18,000	15%
Greenshank <i>T. nebularia</i>	300-400	40%
Turnstone <i>Arenaria interpres</i>	5,000-15,000	25%

wintering flocks. From the counts carried out, it seems likely that some 15-20% of Icelandic breeders winter in Ireland. Many occur in fields around estuaries rather than on the mudflats and some winter at turloughs and on callows in the Shannon Valley. Most of those wintering on the south coast depart in February and there is a corresponding increase in the Shannon Valley.

Bar-tailed Godwits tended to be considered as rather unimportant in Ireland until 1974 when a wader-counting team located a concentration of 6,000-7,000 at Dundalk Bay. The numbers wintering at the sandier estuaries and bays were totalled and we discovered that we had at least 15% of Europe's Bar-tailed Godwits. In some estuaries, they feed alongside Black-tailed Godwits, but usually they feed on the sandier beaches. Their Irish distribution parallels that of the Oystercatcher, just as their main prey, lugworms *Arenicola* and cockles *Cardium* respectively, thrive in similar sandy habitat.

As well as these species, Ireland has a rather similar pattern of winter wader species to Britain, but the sight of flocks of up to 20 Greenshanks flying around an estuary is perhaps a surprise to an English visitor. Although some 40% of Europe's wintering Greenshanks winter in Ireland, the total involved is relatively small. Reference to table 2 shows a high number of Turnstones, but knowledge of their numbers in Europe is at such a primitive stage that one would be rash to comment on Ireland's importance for the species.

Thrushes and finches

Winter in the west of Ireland means long weeks of mist and rain resulting in flashes of surface water on most low-lying land. Temperatures are rarely below freezing for long, so the ground is normally soft. Fields tend to be

small, and, along laneways, narrow roads and field boundaries, hawthorns *Crataegus* grow profusely. There, Redwings winter in flocks reminiscent of those of the Starlings in the east of Ireland. Field after field as far as the eye can see hold over a hundred each, feeding avidly on the ground or on the hawthorn hedges. Nobody has any idea how many Redwings winter in Ireland: the numbers are high in all parts except the east, but enormous west of the Shannon. Song Thrushes are also numerous, but Fieldfares are far less common. So, when one discusses Ireland's importance for wintering thrushes, it is chiefly the Redwing that one is considering.

Large numbers of finches, mostly Chaffinches, also winter in Ireland, but we know even less of their numbers than we do of the Redwing flocks. Bramblings winter as well and occur locally in flocks of up to 50 or so, but are very much more numerous in some years than in others. The writer has found them in cut-away bogs in the midlands, but whether significant numbers occur in this specialised habitat is unknown.

Passage migrants

Ireland's location on the Atlantic seaboard of Europe means that it is overflowed by many northerly breeding birds moving south to winter. Most wildfowl visiting Ireland in autumn appear to remain in winter, though it is likely that many of the Wigeons (presumably Icelandic) which arrive in Kerry and on the northwest coast in October move on to Britain or the Continent as numbers decline rapidly in these places. Some waders, however, occur in much larger numbers in autumn and spring than at other seasons. Most estuaries hold three or four times as many Oystercatchers and Redshanks in autumn as in winter and perhaps twice as many in spring. Grey Plovers reach a peak in spring, but where the birds come from is a mystery at present. Greenshanks, Spotted Redshanks and Ruffs are also much commoner in autumn.

The seabird passage off the southwest and west coasts is probably the most spectacular to be observed in Europe. As well as huge movements of the local breeding seabirds, there are large visible movements of Sooty, Great and, in some years, Cory's Shearwaters. Great and Arctic Skuas are common and Pomarine Skuas regular, though not common, in autumn. All three skuas occur in spring as well, when flocks of Pomarine Skuas moving west along the southwest coast form one of the most exciting spectacles for the seawatcher. Although the numbers of seabirds passing per hour have been recorded annually for almost 20 years at Cape Clear Island, Co. Cork, and for shorter periods elsewhere, we still understand little more about the movements of these birds than we did ten years ago.

Passerine migrants are less obvious on passage in Ireland than in most other west European or Mediterranean countries. The main reason, of course, is that Ireland is too far west to be on the main migration route for most summer visitors to northern Europe, though very large numbers of some species (e.g. Willow Warblers and Swallows) do occur in spring in most years in Co. Wexford at the southeast corner of the country. In autumn, Ireland receives a scattering of European scarce migrants, the largest numbers invariably following periods of southeasterly winds. Fewer

Nearctic passerines have been identified in Ireland than in Britain, partly, perhaps, because of the relative lack of coverage in Ireland.

Hard-weather movements

Although notoriously wet, the Irish climate is extremely mild. The mean daily minimum air temperature in January during 1931-60 ranged from 1°C in parts of the Antrim plateau to 4.5°C on the southwest coast (Rohan 1975). This is the explanation of the country's importance for many European birds in cold weather.

During the cold winter of 1962/63, Dobinson & Richards (1964) reported substantial westerly and southerly movements of many species in Britain with Lapwings, Skylarks, Fieldfares and Redwings most numerous and Golden Plovers, Snipe, Blackbirds, Meadow Pipits and Linnets also prominent. Lapwings and Skylarks were most numerous with 'many millions' pouring into and out of Britain. These are the most obvious immigrants to Ireland in cold spells in any year. Birds can be seen flying in across the Irish Sea in large flocks. Ducks, particularly Teal, were also prominent passing through Britain in the 1962/63 winter; counts in recent winters in Ireland have shown that peak numbers invariably occur during cold spells.

Just as immigration is immediate when the temperature falls, so emigration is equally sudden when warmer weather moves in. For short periods, the numbers of certain species are enormous, but they are impossible to quantify. Around Cork Harbour, for example, numbers of Lapwings in 1978/79 rose from 4,000 in November to 12,000 during cold weather in December, dropped off to 5,000 in a mild January and then increased again to 10,000 during a cold two weeks in early February. Impressions from other parts of Co. Cork during the same winter suggested that this pattern repeated itself throughout the county.

The conservation problem

Ireland is a fast-developing country with the highest growth rate in the EEC in 1978. The Irish farmer has prospered from the increased prices resulting from the Common Agricultural Policy. Land prices have risen in parallel with farmer prosperity, so that good agricultural land is now some 70% more expensive than comparable land in England. The combination of increasing profits from farming and soaring land prices has added to the pressure for land drainage. The major nature conservation problem facing Ireland today is how to safeguard the most important remaining undrained wetlands. The Shannon Valley and the remaining turloughs of the west are all threatened by drainage proposals.

Economic progress in rural Ireland has also brought a pollution problem for many lakes. Pig slurry and domestic sewage have enriched a number of important lakes, though not yet to the extent that numbers of birds have been noticeably reduced. Fishing has suffered, however, and the campaign to improve water quality is led by angling and tourism interests.

Urban development also threatens the habitat of many wintering birds. Several important east coast estuaries are earmarked for the dumping of refuse and one, Rogerstown, has already been partially reclaimed by refuse tipping. Reclamation of sites for industrial development is also proceeding, though at a slow pace as yet.

Besides the destruction of habitat and pollution, the other important threat to Ireland's wintering birds is shooting. Shooting—and particularly the organisation of shooting parties of foreign visitors as a business venture—causes excessive pressure on the duck, goose and Snipe populations in some areas. The organisation, however, of most Irish shooting men into gun clubs, and the development of an awareness of the necessity to conserve today's birds for the sportsmen of future years, gives hope for the future.

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Irish seabird islands

Oscar J. Merne



Although Ireland is not large in area, the mainland and associated islands have a coastline of over 4,000 km. There are just over 1,000 islands of a significant size (i.e. large enough to appear on the standard 1:126,720 Ordnance Survey maps in use in Ireland) and the majority have some breeding seabirds on them, although only about 20 could be regarded as being of great significance in terms of absolute numbers of seabirds and species-diversity. There are no generally accepted criteria for assessing the importance of sites for breeding seabirds, but I have selected ten islands or groups of islands for special consideration (see pages 81-84).

A total of 21 species of seabirds breeds regularly in Ireland and the numbers of each are reasonably well known, mainly as a result of the 1969-70 'Operation Seafarer' census (Cramp *et al.* 1974). The main omission from this census was the inland breeding populations of some gulls and terns, several of which are considerable. In addition, certain important islands, particularly off the Mayo coast, were not visited during the census period, due to inaccessibility in bad weather. The counts for some species were probably quite accurate, but, as elsewhere, problems were encountered with Manx Shearwaters and Storm Petrels because of their nocturnal habits, and with the auks because of the difficulties of interpretation of counts of birds in attendance at colonies. Nevertheless, at

least the general order of abundance of each species is known and it is clear that several species occur in Ireland in numbers which are of international significance.

The data from Operation Seafarer suggest that the Irish population of the Manx Shearwater is approximately 20% of the British and Irish totals combined, which in turn form the major part of the world population of the nominate race. The census was inconclusive for assessing the Storm Petrel population of Britain and Ireland, but the colonies of the Kerry islands are probably the largest in the world, with two of at least 10,000 pairs each. Two Mayo colonies, Inishglora and Illaunmaistir, not censused in 1969-70, have since also been found to hold huge colonies, each approaching or exceeding 10,000 pairs. The Gannet colony on Little Skellig in Co. Kerry, with a population of 20,000 pairs, is one of the world's largest and contains 10% of the world total. Irish Cormorants form about 23% of the combined British and Irish population, while Shags constitute 8%. The proportions of those other species for which it is possible to relate the Irish populations to the combined British and Irish totals are shown in table 1. The Irish population of the Roseate Tern represents not only 72% of the British and Irish total, but probably about two-thirds of the European total, since the species breeds regularly elsewhere only in a couple of colonies in western France.

Ten of Ireland's most important seabird islands

Details of each island or group of islands appear below; eight of the ten sites are also considered on pages 64-71; breeding seabird numbers at each are summarised in table 1.

Lambay Island, Dublin Lambay is the largest and by far the most important seabird island on the east coast. It lies 4 km off the north Co. Dublin coast and is reached by boat from Rush and from other ports. It is, however, privately owned and casual birdwatching visitors are not allowed to land. Good views of the breeding birds may be had from a boat circumnavigating the island. Current seabird research is centred mainly on Cormorants and Shags. (See also 5 on page 64)

Saltee Islands, Wexford There are two islands in the group: Little Saltee, which lies 3.4 km off Kilmore Quay, and Great Saltee, which is 5.4 km offshore. Little Saltee has a large Cormorant colony (about 280 pairs), but otherwise lacks some of the species present on Great Saltee, and in any case has smaller numbers of those species it shares with the larger island. It is also difficult to land on Little Saltee. Great Saltee is uninhabited and has no regular boat service, but can be reached from Kilmore Quay by arrangement with local fishermen. During the breeding season, parties of birdwatchers and others sail to the island almost daily, weather permitting. The islands are privately owned and, while day visitors are welcome, those wishing to camp must seek permission from the owner. Current research covers all 12 breeding seabirds, with particular emphasis on Cormorants, Shags, Gannets, Kittiwakes and the auks. (See also 11 on pages 65-66)

Bull and Cow Rocks, Cork These tiny Atlantic islands lie 4.5 and 2.5 km respectively off Dursey Head in the extreme west of Co. Cork. There is a manned lighthouse on top of the Bull Rock and nowadays this is relieved by helicopter from Castletown Berehaven. Casual visitors will find it difficult to get to them. Both rocks are precipitous and have impressive natural arches running from one side to the other. The cliffs and tops are covered with breeding seabirds, notably over 1,500 pairs of Gannets on the Bull Rock. (See also 25 on page 68)

Table 1. Approximate numbers of

This table is based largely on counts made during 1969-70 (Cramp *et al.* 1974),

Species	Rathlin Island	Lambay Island	Saltee Islands	Bull and Cow Rocks	Skelligs
Fulmar <i>Fulmarus glacialis</i>	100-1,000	75	220-230	6	590-600
Manx Shearwater <i>Puffinus puffinus</i>	1,000-10,000	50-100	50-100	?	5,000
Storm Petrel <i>Hydrobates pelagicus</i>	—	—	—	2,000-5,000	10,000
Gannet <i>Sula bassana</i>	—	—	275	1,500	20,000
Cormorant <i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>	—	300	280	?	—
Shag <i>P. aristotelis</i>	10-100	260	370	?	1-9
Black-headed Gull <i>Larus ridibundus</i>	10-100	—	—	—	—
Common Gull <i>L. canus</i>	10-100	—	—	—	—
Lesser Black-backed Gull <i>L. fuscus</i>	10-100	90-100	100-500	?	28
Herring Gull <i>L. argentatus</i>	1,000-10,000	10,000	7,000	10-1,000	100-250
Great Black-backed Gull <i>L. marinus</i>	10-100	100	500	?	6
Kittiwake <i>Rissa tridactyla</i>	1,000-10,000	1,470	2,500-2,600	100-1,000	950
Sandwich Tern <i>Sterna sandvicensis</i>	—	—	—	—	—
Roseate Tern <i>S. dougallii</i>	—	—	—	—	—
Common Tern <i>S. hirundo</i>	—	—	—	—	—
Arctic Tern <i>S. paradisaea</i>	—	—	—	—	—
Little Tern <i>S. albifrons</i>	—	—	—	—	—
Guillemot <i>Uria aalge</i>	10,000	10,000	9,000	2,000	250
Razorbill <i>Alca torda</i>	7,000	1,400	5,200	100-1,000	750
Black Guillemot <i>Cepphus grylle</i>	10-100	1-9	—	—	—
Puffin <i>Fratercula arctica</i>	10-1,000	100	1,200	?	6,000

The Skelligs, Kerry Only two of the three islands are significant for birds: Great Skellig (or Skellig Michael) and Little Skellig (plate 13). Both are jagged rock pinnacles in the Atlantic, 13 and 11 km, respectively, from Bolus Head in west Co. Kerry. With no landing place and the constant ocean swell, it is a rare thing to be able to set foot on Little Skellig and climb among

13. Aerial view of Little Skellig, Co. Kerry, July 1974 (Oscar J. Merne)



pairs of breeding seabirds in Ireland

updated where possible (see references on pages 92-93). * = most are inland

Puffin Island	Blasket Islands	Clare Island	Inishglora	Illelaunmaistir	Irish total	Irish total as % of British and Irish total
656	1,150	1,000	—	1-100	15,468	5%
0,000-20,000	1,000-2,000	10-100	—	10-100	?	?20%
4,000	40,000	?	10,000-20,000	7,500-10,000	?	>50%
—	—	1-2	—	—	21,655	16%
—	1-9	—	—	—	1,865	23%
17	60	10-100	—	1-100	2,610	8%
—	?	—	—	—	*	—
3	?	1-9	1-100	—	*	—
50-125	150-250	?	10-100	1-9	1,687	4%
163	360	10-100	100-1,000	10-100	51,970	16%
100	280	10-100	10-100	1-9	3,141	14%
194	600	1,000	—	—	42,883	9%
—	—	—	—	—	2,125	18%
—	—	—	—	—	1,713	72%
—	150	—	10-100	—	3,406	23%
—	?	—	10-100	—	1,041	3%
—	—	—	10-100	—	296	16%
138	250	1,000-10,000	—	—	78,640	14%
500-700	1,200	1,000-10,000	—	1-9	48,361	34%
—	5-12	10-100	1-9	5	738	9%
7,000	8,600	10-100	—	5,500	?	?

the 20,000 pairs of Gannets. There is, however, a manned lighthouse, as well as important archaeological structures, on Great Skellig, and consequently a good landing place. Weather permitting, boats sail daily during the summer from Portmagee or Knightstown (Valencia Island). En route, the boats pass very close to Little Skellig, so the Gannets and other breeding seabirds may be viewed and photographed. Great Skellig, though lacking a Gannet colony, has ten, or possibly 11, species of breeding seabirds, some of them in very large numbers. To stay overnight on the island, it is necessary to obtain permission from the Commissioners of Irish Lights. Little Skellig is an Irish Wildbird Conservancy sanctuary. (See also 26 on page 68)

Puffin Island, Kerry This island lies very close inshore, 4 km south of Bray Head (Valencia Island), but, directly across the narrow and treacherous sound, the mainland cliffs rise sheer to 300 m. While there are large numbers of Puffins and smaller numbers of nine other seabirds for the day visitor to observe, it is the night birds, the Manx Shearwater and the Storm Petrel, which are really impressive, the former numbering over 10,000 pairs. The island is uninhabited and privately owned. To get there, a boat must be specially hired from Portmagee or Knightstown, and to camp on the island the owner's permission must be sought. The main seabird work is periodic ringing of Manx Shearwaters, Storm Petrels and Puffins. (See also 27 on page 68)

The Blasket Islands, Kerry There are six main islands in the group, all but Great Blasket (the largest and most accessible) being of considerable importance as seabird breeding sites. The outermost island, Inishtearaght, has a manned lighthouse and is the most westerly point in Ireland at just over 10°40'W. Beginish, the smallest and lowest island in the group, lies in Blasket Sound and can be reached by boat (from a pier near Dunquin) en route to Great Blasket, which has regular boat trips in the summer months. Special arrangements need to be made to get to Inishtearaght, Inishtooskert, Inishvickillane and Inishnabro, and landings are often difficult or impossible, except by helicopter. It is probably best to organise an expedition

rather than go on day visits, and the necessary permissions must be sought from the various owners (the Commissioners of Irish Lights in the case of Inishtearaght). There is no current seabird research in progress, but the islands have been well studied until recently. (See also 28 on page 68)

Clare Island, Mayo Lying at the entrance to Clew Bay, this large, inhabited island is 8 km from west to east and rises to nearly 500 m at the northwest summit. This in turn drops almost sheer into the sea and is flanked by impressive cliffs which continue uninterrupted for 6.5 km. There is a regular boat service from Roonah Quay, west of Louisburgh, and there are guest-houses on the island. Seabird watching is strenuous, but is rewarded by views of 11 breeding species, and possibly a further two whose status on the island is at present in doubt. The island was the subject of the renowned Clare Island Survey (Ussher 1912). (See also 42 on page 70)

Inishglora, Mayo This small, rather flat and low island is a little over 1.5 km west of The Mullet peninsula in northwest Co. Mayo. It is reached by small boat hired from a local fisherman on the adjacent mainland. It differs from the other islands already described in having three tern species nesting on it. There are five, or possibly six, other seabirds breeding there, but the island is primarily important for its huge Storm Petrel colony. It is regularly visited by bird-ringers, especially from Northern Ireland, and, after each visit, estimates of Storm Petrel numbers are pushed even higher. Over 4,000 have been caught in a few nets in a few nights and it is anybody's guess how many there really are. No seabird work has been done apart from this ringing and some basic censusing and surveying, and there is no recent literature concerning the island.

Illaunmaistir, Mayo This small hump of rock, some 100 m high and nominally about 5 ha in area, lies just off the impressive mainland cliffs that extend over 30 km from Benwee Head to Downpatrick Head in north Co. Mayo. It was acquired by the Irish Wildbird Conservancy as a sanctuary on the grounds that it had a colony of over 2,000 pairs of Puffins. Subsequent investigation has revealed about 5,500 pairs of Puffins and, in addition, provisional estimates suggest that there are 7,500-10,000 pairs of Storm Petrels, previously unsuspected of being present in large numbers. It is very difficult to land on the island and even more difficult to set up camp, but anyone willing to make the attempt should contact the Irish Wildbird Conservancy.

Rathlin Island, Antrim This large inhabited island is about 10.5 km from end to end and lies 4 km off Fair Head on the north coast of Co. Antrim, close to the 22-km strait that separates Ireland from Scotland. It is reached by regular boat service from Ballycastle. The RSPB has established a sanctuary on part of the extensive cliffs. While Storm Petrels, Gannets, Cormorants and terns are absent as breeding birds, the presence of the not exclusively marine Black-headed and Common Gulls give this island the edge over all but the Blasket group for species-diversity. (See also 50 on page 71)

Others might have chosen a different 'top ten' Irish seabird islands, but there are probably not more than a handful of other possible contenders. Tern Island, in Wexford Harbour, would certainly have been included, but, alas, that island no longer exists, owing to erosion in recent winter storms. Before its break-up, it held up to 1,500 pairs of Roseate, over 800 pairs of Common, over 600 pairs of Sandwich, up to 100 pairs of Little and 50-60 pairs of Arctic Terns, as well as more than 800 pairs of Black-headed Gulls and one or two pairs of Herring Gulls. For the purposes of this paper, 'Irish seabird islands' has been taken to mean islands with major breeding colonies: a wider interpretation would certainly bring in Cape Clear Island (plate 14), the most southerly point of Ireland (except the Fastnet Rock), which is unrivalled as a site for observing the passage of seabirds, rare and



14. Cape Clear Island, Co. Cork, with projecting seawatch point, Blananarragaun, right of centre (*T. B. H. Rose*)

common, breeding and non-breeding. Movements of over 35,000 birds per hour involving more than 40 seabird species have been recorded.

Seabird enthusiasts frustrated by bad weather in attempts to visit any of the islands listed above may see some spectacular mainland colonies at such places as the Old Head of Kinsale (Co. Cork), Loop Head and the Cliffs of Moher (Co. Clare), the north Co. Mayo cliffs, the cliffs of Tormore and Slievetooley in southwest Co. Donegal and Horn Head in north Co. Donegal.

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Ornithology in Ireland

Raymond J. O'Connor



Biologically speaking, Ireland is a single entity, with little difference between the impoverished avifauna of Northern Ireland and the impoverished avifauna of the Republic; both political regions possess fewer than 50% of the breeding species of Great Britain and both have a rather

different winter bird population from that in the more eastern island. Political and cultural differences between the two sides of the border of Northern Ireland have, however, led to rather different approaches to the study of these birds. In Northern Ireland, political attention is directed eastwards, ensuring the development of political and organisational structures broadly paralleling the system found in Great Britain. Even the RSPB, for example, is precluded by its charter from operating outside the United Kingdom, so that it has become a significant force in Northern Ireland ornithology but has been confined to offering advice and encouragement to bird conservationists in the Republic of Ireland. Ornithologists in the Republic, on the other hand, operate in a rather different framework of social opinion, the latter heavily influenced by the British scene, but with a strong transatlantic component present. The result has been a distinctiveness of ornithological style in the Republic.

The position of Irish ornithology (referring now both to Northern Ireland and to the Republic) is probably best described as being 20 to 25 years behind that of Britain, but learning fast and effectively. Several features of the Irish scene are reminiscent of the past situation in Britain. First, at a general level, there is the relatively low public awareness of the threat to the Irish countryside which exists as the result of modern industrial and agricultural practice; it is not yet realised that birds and their habitats need positive action for their conservation. Secondly, among ornithologists there is a disproportionate interest in documenting the occurrence of rare species and a relatively low interest in 'scientific' ornithology. Thirdly, there are very few professionally qualified ecologists in Ireland and proportionately few of them are ornithologists. These features form a backdrop to the current work by ornithologists in Ireland.

Some history

The last decade has been one of particular development in the quality and quantity of ornithological research in Ireland. It is probably fair to say that the first 50 years of this century depended on the labours of a handful of ornithologists of the calibre of Major R. F. Ruttledge, G. R. Humphreys, the late C. F. Scroope, and the late Rev P. G. Kennedy. Their labours and their extended correspondence with countrymen and shooting people throughout the country resulted in a handful of standard reference books, notably *The Birds of Ireland* (Kennedy *et al.* 1954) and its update *Ireland's Birds* (Ruttledge 1966). Another book of note was *An Island Sanctuary* (Kennedy 1953), describing the birdlife of the North Bull Island in Dublin Bay. These books—and the annual *Irish Bird Reports*, edited by Ruttledge from 1953 to 1971—gave a measure of cohesion to the activities of ornithologists throughout the country, but it was an extremely loose cohesion. A personal reminiscence of this early era can be found in Humphreys (1979).

By the early 1960s, a variety of organisations had sprung into being to tackle various bird problems in Ireland. Some, like the Irish Society for the Protection of Birds and the Irish Ornithologists' Club, were national bodies (though often with the bulk of their membership centred around the capital

city). Others were more local, meeting in the convivial surroundings of a Dublin pub, for example, with the first item of the agenda the ordering of drinks by those present! Some, like those already mentioned, concerned themselves with all species of birds; others, such as the Irish Wildfowl Committee, had been set up to tackle problems associated with a particular group of birds. With overlapping interests and overlapping membership and a variety of outside bodies—particularly shooting organisations, game councils and governmental departments—to be dealt with, the scene was set for confusion. The year 1966, however, saw the event which was to become the real strength of the Irish ornithological movement: three major organisations—the ISPB, the IOC, and the IWC (which by then had become the Irish Wildfowl Conservancy rather than merely a committee)—agreed to dissolve themselves and merge into a single or new organisation, the Irish Wildbird Conservancy. Careful diplomacy having obtained the agreement of the various committee members of these organisations beforehand, a polite note informed members of the three organisations that their subscription orders entitled them to membership of the new body in lieu of their previous membership: those who did not like the new arrangement could have their subscriptions refunded. Thus were the memberships of the three organisations brought together to provide a unified voice and concerted action on Irish birds. The results have been spectacular: from a membership of some 800 in 1967 (when nearly one-third of its support came from overseas) the IWC has grown to 1,800 members, mainly within Ireland.

The IWC has remained the dominant organisation on the Irish scene in the Republic, but it liaises closely with other organisations, particularly with the RSPB in Northern Ireland and with the BTO in Britain. One of the earliest actions of the new society—and one that had given it its claim to national authority on birds within the Republic—was to join in starting an annual IWC/RSPB 'All Ireland Conference on Bird Conservation', held in alternate years in Northern Ireland and in the Republic. The event transformed Irish ornithology: from being the concern of relatively parochial groups, bird conservation became a serious matter worthy of national debate and capable of attracting speakers from both parts of Ireland and from the mainland of Britain. As the IWC grew, it developed a series of branches and links with established bird clubs and societies in centres of ornithological population: Dublin, Cork, Galway, North Munster, Sligo, Waterford and Wexford. This development has given the IWC features of both the BTO and of the RSPB Members' Groups: an organisational infra-structure capable of achieving widespread coverage through the country for national projects, while at the same time providing foci for social and recreational aspects of birdwatching. These structures reflect more the organisation of the Audubon Society in the USA rather than any of the societies in Britain. In the same vein, the annual report of the combined societies became the *Annual Report and Conservation Review*, turning itself into a forum for promoting ecological and conservation ideas in their wider context, placing emphasis on habitats and environmental quality rather than purely on birds.

Although the Northern Ireland Ornithologists' Club has, for instance, carried out important survey work at Lough Neagh, the major influence on the development of ornithology in Northern Ireland has been the RSPB. It has pursued there its usual policy of acquisition of reserves, thereby creating foci for the birdwatching public and providing tangible evidence of the value of bird haunts in a manner accessible to the general public. With the resources of the RSPB behind a determined policy of expansion in Northern Ireland, the ornithological world there has been transformed. This development has undoubtedly been aided by the presence of two or three individuals in influential posts: both the Conservation Branch of the NI government and the Department of Extra Mural Studies of Queen's University, Belfast, have appointed ornithologists to staff positions from which they have brought some of the resources of their departments to the development of Northern Ireland ornithology; in this they have supplemented the long-standing support provided by the Ulster Museum.

Education

One of the striking features of the IWC's programme is the emphasis it has put on education and educational activities, both for schools and for the general public. School posters, competitions and quizzes for schoolchildren (individually and in school-based projects), annual courses in ornithology for school teachers, and the superb publicity films *A Hundred Thousand Wings* and *The Cry on the Mountain* have all contributed to this emphasis. This sustained educational campaign by the IWC has undoubtedly raised the level of environmental consciousness in Ireland: by 1977, birdwatching and ecology had become so respectable that the annual Aer Lingus 'Young Scientist of the Year' award went to a schoolboy, Michael O'Briain, for an ecological study of the important wader haunt of Rogerstown Estuary in northern Co. Dublin. Teachers needing ideas for similar projects can refer to an IWC booklet *Projects on Birds* for advice. Several hundred copies of this book have been sold to date and the recent IWC/RSPB booklet *Birds in Ireland* will doubtless help further.

Reserves

The Republic differs from Northern Ireland in the type of reserves run by its societies. Where the RSPB—with its large staff and extensive membership—can manage a large series of reserves as financial enterprises, the IWC has, with important exceptions such as the Wexford Slobs, been able to purchase only relatively cheap reserves not particularly threatened by pressure of people. But it has also entered into management agreements with the owners of particular pieces of land with a view to managing that land in the interests of birds alongside the interests of the owners. In this way, a series of important bird haunts has been brought under reserve status. In many cases, even part-time (voluntary) wardens have been appointed to look after the bird interests of these sites. In addition, Irish ornithologists have successfully fought several planning enquiry or court battles to prevent particularly important bird sites being 'developed', in some cases fighting their case alongside the shooting fraternity from the

same region. Such victories, the publicity accompanying them, and the publicity associated with the purchase of each reserve, however remote from the centres of population, all contributed to the establishment of the principle that birds matter politically in Ireland in the same way as they do in Britain.

The universities

The involvement of Irish universities in ornithological work has been sporadic, both in Northern Ireland and in the Republic. No university has established itself as an Irish centre for ornithology along the lines of Oxford, Aberdeen or Durham, and there are no career ornithologists on the permanent staff of any university. Past provision for the study of birds has treated the subject as a minor ecological topic, so that university activity in bird work has depended on the personal interest of a handful of individuals pursuing an ornithological doctorate as research students. Even granting a slight increase in the frequency of such students during the 1970s, it remains the case that the university contribution to Irish ornithology is barely significant when compared with the amateur and government scientist activities.

The role of government

The role of the Irish government in the recent flourishing of ornithology is extremely interesting. Shooting is a major rural pastime everywhere and there is a strong game-club and gun-club lobby. Consequently, such research as the relatively impoverished country of Ireland has been able to sustain has been directed towards wildfowl and game problems, notably through research on the Mallard, the Red Grouse and the White-fronted Goose; more recently, work on the Irish population of the Woodcock has been started. But one of the striking features of the last 15 or so years has been the willingness of government ministers to give a sympathetic hearing to the conservation arguments put forward by the IWC, particularly when the conservancy has itself previously consulted with the shooting interests (usually to obtain an agreed position with respect to government). The public support given to the IWC and the Irish conservation case by ministers or their senior civil servants is undoubtedly a factor contributing to the publicity received by the IWC within Ireland. More tangible support has been afforded to Irish ornithology in the form of grants for educational work and outdoor activities by young people, by financial support for the Irish work towards the BTO/IWC *Atlas* (Sharrock 1976) and, more recently, through financial support in publishing *Ireland's Wetlands and their Birds* (Hutchinson 1979), the IWC report of the four years of the Wetlands Enquiry in Ireland. Despite these very real forms of support to Irish ornithology, it took ten years to get a promised Wildlife Act into the Dáil (the Irish parliament) and the results of this have yet to bear fruit. The IWC is represented on the statutory Wildlife Advisory Council set up under the Act, which itself contains many admirable features, some of them well in advance of Britain. Nevertheless, it is generally felt in Ireland that the

real test of the government's determination to develop a modern conservation policy (which in Ireland involves a large component of ornithological conservation) lies in its attitude towards reserves acquisition (O'Gorman & Wymes 1973). Only public ownership and enlightened management of the major wetlands for which Ireland is deservedly famous can guarantee the continued survival of these areas. The fate of sites such as the Little Brosna and Rahasane Turlough lies with the Irish government and not with the amateur ornithologists of the IWC.

In Northern Ireland, policy and practice in respect of State-owned reserves are similar to those in Britain, though, as the remit of the Nature Conservancy Council does not extend there, administration is via a Conservation Branch at Stormont. The more direct access to centres of power afforded conservationists by this arrangement is apparent in the network of reserves (of all types) distributed across Northern Ireland and in a high level of conservation management at ornithologically important sites.

Publications

It is perhaps on the publications side that the truly active state of Irish ornithology can be appreciated. The first 60 years of this century were appallingly devoid of publications: the major work of Ussher & Warren (1900) was virtually the sole authoritative work on Irish birds until its 1954 replacement. There was even one period when no journal of Irish ornithology was available: the *Irish Naturalist*, which carried many bird notes at the turn of the century, met its demise in 1923, leaving a gap which was not filled until 1925, when the *Irish Naturalists' Journal* commenced its publication. This latter journal carried occasional ornithological notes and infrequent papers on the birds of Ireland. In 1953, Major R. F. Ruttledge began the *Irish Bird Report*. Effectively an annual classified list of rare birds and occurrences, the IBR remained the sole national outlet for ornithological observations for many years: no local avifaunas, no local reports, and no outlet for the Irish scientist beyond the erudite *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy*. The *Irish Bird Report* came to carry occasional articles on the birds of Ireland, but it was not until 1977 that the first purely ornithological journal—*Irish Birds*—made its appearance. *Irish Birds* has existed for only two years, but that it has filled a gap is already clear. Produced annually, issues to date have a coverage somewhere between that of *British Birds* and *Bird Study*, as well as incorporating the *Irish Bird Report* and an annual report on ringing in Ireland. It is undoubtedly one of the most important developments in Irish ornithological publication.

Several regional bird reports have also made their appearance in Ireland, with various degrees of permanence. The first and the only one still being published is the *Cork Bird Report* (1963-71 and 1977-79). The *Dublin and Wicklow Bird Report* has not appeared since 1975, while reports covering Co. Waterford, Co. Louth and Co. Wexford have also come and gone in recent years. Their publication reflects the dedication of individual birders, few places having the large population needed to sustain regular publication on a recurring basis. These publications have been supplemented by a proliferation of local bird books of varying quality; *The Birds of Dublin and*

Wicklow (Hutchinson 1975) covers the best studied region, but several books covering the catchment areas of some of the bird observatories—the Saltee Islands (Roche & Merne 1977; Perry & Warburton 1976), Cape Clear Island (Sharrock 1973) and Malin Head (part of the Inishown Peninsula) (Perry 1975)—have all been produced. There have also been corporate volumes on the Wexford area (Merne 1975), Clare and Limerick (Stapleton 1975), Galway and Mayo (Whilde 1977) and Lough Beg in Northern Ireland (D'Arcy 1977). These books represent a far cry from the first 60 years of the century described above.

Record assessment is on similar lines to that in Britain. The Irish Records Panel parallels the *British Birds* Rarities Committee and acts in co-operation with the Northern Ireland Bird Records Committee.

Perhaps because the avifauna is more restricted than in Britain, Irish ornithologists have not produced many identification guides, nor works on the biology of particular birds, but there are signs that this pattern may be changing. The books now making their appearance from the pens of Irish authors are directed to a less sophisticated birdwatching public than in Britain. To date, guides have appeared for waterfowl and for seabirds and there are also local guides to identifying birds in particular areas: Northern Ireland (Deane 1975) and Wexford (Merne 1975). Several other books treat birds in a wider zoological context.

Apart from formal publications, several newsletters have been produced in recent years. The best-established of these is *IWC News*, the newsletter of the Irish Wildbird Conservancy, published four times a year. Initially produced on a duplicator, the newsletter has now achieved a more formal appearance and always includes photographs. An *Irish Ringers' Bulletin* has also made its appearance lately, though its regularity of publication remains to be tested. The newly founded Ulster Trust for Nature Conservation also produces a newsletter—the *Irish Hare*—and seems set to carry a certain amount of ornithological news. A number of other bulletins circulate, but their future cannot yet be said to be certain. Finally, Cape Clear Island off the Cork coast and Copeland Island off Co. Down continue as active observatories and produce annual reports.

The present and the future

History, however, is perhaps of little importance for present-day Irish ornithology. In some ways, the Irish are at a crossroads in their ornithological development. Birding interests in Ireland focus, so far as groups go, on seabirds and on wetland birds. Much effort went into Irish participation in the 1969-70 'Operation Seafarer' census and has established a moderately good understanding of seabird distribution in Ireland. On the other hand, skilled and committed manpower is not sufficiently plentiful in Ireland to allow systematic monitoring of changes in these colonies, despite their importance. The Wetlands Enquiry—organised by the IWC to parallel the Birds of Estuaries Enquiry in Britain—has now finished and the results have appeared as a book (Hutchinson 1979). Finally, the distribution of breeding birds throughout Ireland was thoroughly covered—admittedly by a disappointingly small proportion of the Irish ornithologists—in the

1968-72 atlas project, to provide a never-before-achieved wealth of detail on the pattern of Irish bird distribution. On the other hand, the Register of Ornithological Sites evoked little interest in Ireland: though there has been a cataloguing of the seabird colonies, a listing of the important wetlands, and collection of some material on the important oakwoods. This further reflects the considerable ignorance, even among ornithologists, of the threats to the Irish countryside. By the same token, no attempts are being made to monitor systematically the levels of bird populations in Ireland. To some extent, this is understandable: Ireland has only a fraction of the breeding species of Great Britain, with consequently restricted scope for breeding studies, and the glamour of special study in any event lies with the wildfowl and waders, and with a handful of rarer species such as the Peregrine. Intriguingly, the apathy towards work other than on these groups is not present in Northern Ireland. There has been some talk of introducing the Christmas Bird Count system into the Republic. In some ways, this scheme, so popular and successful in the USA, has many of the characteristics—rarity-hunting, travel, and rivalry—which seem to appeal to Irish birdwatchers more than they do to English observers.

In conclusion, Irish ornithology has achieved nearly two decades of vigorous growth and expansion, largely consequential on the merging of individual activities into the IWC programme in the Republic and on the expansion of RSPB work in Northern Ireland. But these organisations have in many ways served merely as formal outlets for the energies of a very few really active ornithologists whose drive has carried others along. Irish ornithology remains vulnerable while it is so narrowly based.

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Appendix 1. Alphabetical list of species mentioned in the texts of preceding five papers on Ireland's birds

Avocet <i>Recurvirostra avosetta</i>	Fulmar <i>Fulmarus glacialis</i>
Blackbird <i>Turdus merula</i>	Gadwall <i>Anas strepera</i>
Brambling <i>Fringilla montifringilla</i>	Gannet <i>Sula bassana</i>
Bunting, Corn <i>Miliaria calandra</i>	Godwit, Bar-tailed <i>Limosa lapponica</i>
Chaffinch <i>Fringilla coelebs</i>	Godwit, Black-tailed <i>L. limosa</i>
Chough <i>Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax</i>	Goldeneye <i>Bucephala clangula</i>
Coot <i>Fulica atra</i>	Goose, Barnacle <i>Branta leucopsis</i>
Cormorant <i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>	Goose, Brent <i>B. bernicla</i>
Corncrake <i>Crex crex</i>	Goose, Greylag <i>Anser anser</i>
Curlew <i>Numenius arquata</i>	Goose, Pink-footed <i>A. brachyrhynchus</i>
Diver, Red-throated <i>Gavia stellata</i>	Goose, White-fronted <i>A. albifrons</i>
Dove, Rock <i>Columba livia</i>	Grebe, Great Crested <i>Podiceps cristatus</i>
Duck, Long-tailed <i>Clangula hyemalis</i>	Greenshank <i>Tringa nebularia</i>
Duck, Tufted <i>Aythya fuligula</i>	Grouse, Red <i>Lagopus lagopus</i>
Dunlin <i>Calidris alpina</i>	Guillemot <i>Uria aalge</i>
Eider <i>Somateria mollissima</i>	Guillemot, Black <i>Cephus grylle</i>
Fieldfare <i>Turdus pilaris</i>	Gull, Black-headed <i>Larus ridibundus</i>

Gull, Common <i>L. canus</i>	Scaup <i>Aythya marila</i>
Gull, Great Black-backed <i>L. marinus</i>	Scoter, Common <i>Melanitta nigra</i>
Gull, Herring <i>L. argentatus</i>	Shag <i>Phalacrocorax aristotelis</i>
Gull, Lesser Black-backed <i>L. fuscus</i>	Shearwater, Cory's <i>Calonectris diomedea</i>
Harrier, Hen <i>Circus cyaneus</i>	Shearwater, Great <i>Puffinus gravis</i>
Heron, Grey <i>Ardea cinerea</i>	Shearwater, Manx <i>P. puffinus</i>
Kittiwake <i>Rissa tridactyla</i>	Shearwater, Sooty <i>P. griseus</i>
Knot <i>Calidris canutus</i>	Shelduck <i>Tadorna tadorna</i>
Lapwing <i>Vanellus vanellus</i>	Shoveler <i>Anas clypeata</i>
Linnet <i>Carduelis cannabina</i>	Skua, Arctic <i>Stercorarius parasiticus</i>
Mallard <i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>	Skua, Great <i>S. skua</i>
Martin, Sand <i>Riparia riparia</i>	Skua, Pomarine <i>S. pomarinus</i>
Oystercatcher <i>Haematopus ostralegus</i>	Skylark <i>Alauda arvensis</i>
Peregrine <i>Falco peregrinus</i>	Snipe <i>Gallinago gallinago</i>
Petrel, Storm <i>Hydrobates pelagicus</i>	Starling <i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>
Phalarope, Red-necked <i>Phalaropus lobatus</i>	Swallow <i>Hirundo rustica</i>
Pintail <i>Anas acuta</i>	Swan, Bewick's <i>Cygnus columbianus</i>
Pipit, Meadow <i>Anthus pratensis</i>	Swan, Mute <i>C. olor</i>
Plover, Golden <i>Pluvialis apricaria</i>	Swan, Whooper <i>C. cygnus</i>
Plover, Grey <i>P. squatarola</i>	Teal <i>Anas crecca</i>
Plover, Ringed <i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>	Tern, Arctic <i>Sterna paradisaea</i>
Pochard <i>Aythya ferina</i>	Tern, Common <i>S. hirundo</i>
Puffin <i>Fratercula arctica</i>	Tern, Little <i>S. albifrons</i>
Quail <i>Coturnix coturnix</i>	Tern, Roseate <i>S. dougallii</i>
Razorbill <i>Alca torda</i>	Tern, Sandwich <i>S. sandvicensis</i>
Redpoll <i>Carduelis flammea</i>	Thrush, Song <i>Turdus philomelos</i>
Redshank <i>Tringa totanus</i>	Turnstone <i>Arenaria interpres</i>
Redshank, Spotted <i>Tringa erythropus</i>	Warbler, Grasshopper <i>Locustella naevia</i>
Redstart <i>Phoenicurus phoenicurus</i>	Warbler, Willow <i>Phylloscopus trochilus</i>
Redwing <i>Turdus iliacus</i>	Warbler, Wood <i>P. sibilatrix</i>
Ring Ouzel <i>T. torquatus</i>	Wigeon <i>Anas penelope</i>
Ruff <i>Philomachus pugnax</i>	Woodcock <i>Scolopax rusticola</i>
Sanderling <i>Calidris alba</i>	Woodpecker, Great Spotted <i>Dendrocopos major</i>

Bird-photographers

21 Richard T. Mills

The founding of a bird observatory on Cape Clear Island, Co. Cork, in 1959 was not only a spectacular success in its own right, but also exerted a profound influence on the development of ornithology in Ireland, and particularly in County Cork. With such a readily accessible and first-class training ground, a steady stream of skilled fieldworkers began to emerge on the mainland in the early 1960s. Soon, they were to form a local group—the Cork Ornithological Society—so that, when Richard Mills arrived on the scene, activity was already intense and interest high.

Although there are few traces left in his accent, Richard Mills spent most of his youth in France. He was born near the Camargue in Provence, but soon moved to Brittany, where he lived for 13 years, before his parents finally settled in the west Cork village of Crookhaven. From Richard's point



15. Richard Mills receiving the Tom Keogh Memorial Trophy, for the best Irish wildlife photograph of 1978 (*Richard T. Mills*)

of view, this was a most fortunate choice, with Roaringwater Bay and Cape Clear only a few kilometres to the south and Mizen Head a stone's throw away to the west. In addition, the scenery around this tiny fishing village is magnificent: there are numerous sandy beaches with long stretches of dunes, steep cliffs, and offshore islands and skerries. A dominant feature of this landscape is that enigmatic stretch of water—Lissagriffin Lake—where, on occasion, American waders have been known to outnumber their Palearctic counterparts. All this is within easy walking distance of the Mills' family home.

Once he had finished school and gone through a couple of uneventful years at university, Richard joined the staff of *The Cork Examiner*, with which he has remained, as a photographer, ever since. It was there that he met his charming and highly tolerant wife, Monica, now the proud mother of three sons.

As a professional, Richard has been highly successful, gaining rapid promotion to a position of seniority and winning a number of national awards, particularly for action pictures of sporting events. The latter are all the more incongruous, as he has virtually no interest in sports as such, apart



16 & 17. Above, Razorbill *Alca torda*, Co. Cork, March 1974; below, Sandwich Terns *Sterna sandvicensis*, Co. Wexford, June 1976 (Richard T. Mills)





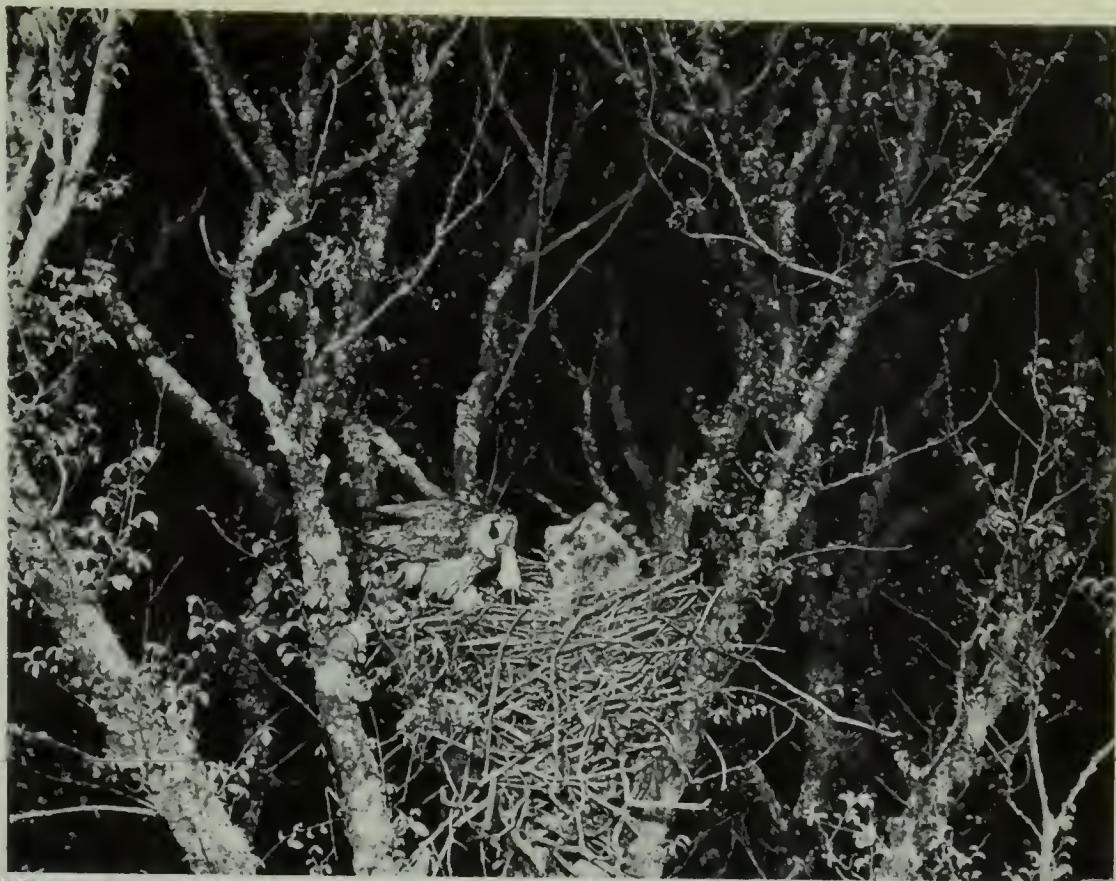
118 & 19. Above, Gannet *Sula bassana*, Great Saltee, Co. Wexford, June 1976; below, Brent Geese *Branta bernicla*, Wigeons *Anas penelope* and Oystercatchers *Haematopus ostralegus*, North Bull Island, Co. Dublin, March 1978 (Richard T. Mills)





20 & 21. Above, Oystercatchers *Haematopus ostralegus*, Co. Cork, April 1974; below, Curlew *Numenius arquata*, Co. Cork, October 1974 (Richard T. Mills)





22. Long-eared Owl *Asio otus*, with common rat *Rattus norvegicus*, at nest with young, Co. Cork, May/June 1975 (Richard T. Mills)

from their photographic value. His most coveted award to date is the Tom Keogh Memorial Trophy for the national wildlife photographic competition (see *Brit. Birds* 71: 426, plate 155).

Early on in his career as a newspaper photographer, Richard began to explore in earnest his interest in wildlife. From the early 1970s, he became a familiar figure around the bird haunts of Co. Cork and elsewhere, especially the Saltee Islands, for which he, like many others, has a special affection. His rise to fame as Ireland's leading bird-photographer was extraordinarily rapid.

Richard's success can be attributed to two things. First, he works extremely hard; he is prepared to spend long hours, sitting in an uncomfortable hide (all night if necessary in the case of his favourite subjects, owls), waiting for the right shot, or patiently stalking a diminutive *Calidris* wader with an enormous and heavy 500-mm lens fitted to a motor-driven Nikon. Secondly, as this collection of his pictures (plates 16-22) shows, his style is notably different from that of most bird-photographers. He has avoided the portrait bird-at-the-nest shot and has instead opted for the more difficult action picture. To him, wildlife photography is a form of sublimated hunting. One goes through the motions of stalking and capturing the prey without hurting a feather.

The early 1970s saw the growth of conservation movements in Ireland. A number of teams were making wildlife films, but relatively few individuals were producing still photographic work of sufficiently high standards to be

published widely. Almost as soon as his pictures became available, however, Richard's work was to be found in a range of Irish magazines, periodicals, books and newspapers. He contributed action shots, not only of birds but also of mammals, to the prestigious Bank calendars. In consequence, his pictures have had a profound influence on the general public's awareness of the environment and its wildlife in Ireland.

Richard Mills is a popular figure with 'twitchers', and, in Co. Cork, there are a few who reach for Mills and his gear before reaching for their notebooks. His success in 'capturing' rarities for posterity is well known. A comment by Major R. F. Ruttledge in the 1971 *Irish Bird Report* is an adequate summary: 'Four superb photographs by R.T.M. were examined, putting all descriptions in the shade!' And yet, he draws no distinction between these rarities and the native species, as on the occasion when he opted to spend the day in a hide at a Hen Harrier's nest rather than go after a Broad-billed Sandpiper which was closer to home.

An extremely amiable character, Richard Mills avoids controversy and high office like the plague. Politics are of no interest to him. Photographing wildlife, in all its forms, but particularly birds, occupies all of his spare time. In the short period since he turned his attention in this direction, he has achieved outstanding results.

At 32, Richard's career can be said to have just started. With his enthusiasm and capacity for hard work, we can look forward to even more varied and exciting portfolios.

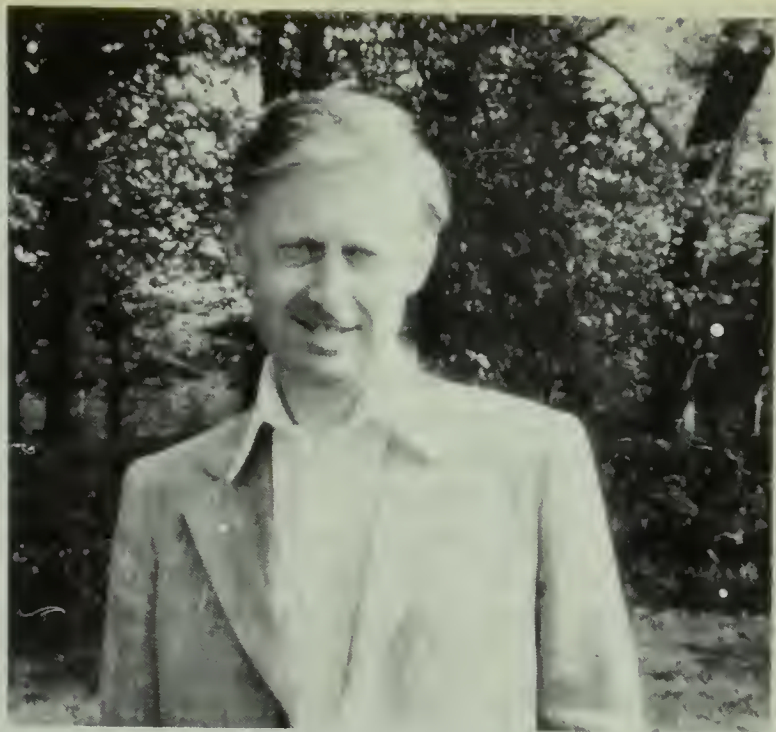
TOM KELLY

Personalities

22 John Temple Lang

Without doubt, John Temple Lang has been one of the most energetic organising forces in Irish ornithology, although his appearance belies that energy. When met, relaxed in an ancient leather armchair in Dublin's University Club on one of his brief visits to Ireland, dressed in his habitual tweed suit, he looks far removed from the modern image of an ornithologist, typically encased in uniform of beard, boots and binoculars. A few moments of conversation indicate immediately how misleading first impressions can be. He is well informed on the state of Irish ornithology; he has firm views on what is needed for the future; and he is bent on convincing the Irish Wildbird Conservancy that action is required urgently to implement these views. Although people may disagree with his opinions, he is always ready to listen and argue the point. But his legal training and his capacity for research generally leave him better equipped to convert his listeners.

John is a solicitor by profession. He was born in 1936 and graduated from Trinity College, Dublin, with a brilliant university record. He has had a varied professional career involving periods in practice, in civil service positions in Ghana and in Ireland, in legal research in Chicago and, since



23. John Temple Lang

1974, in the Legal Service of the Commission of the European Communities. He is a true European. At an early stage of his professional career, he wrote a textbook on law and the Common Market. When abroad, he has always taken every opportunity to extend his experience of conservation and ornithological research by visiting reserves and making contact with leading ornithologists.

His lasting monument in Ireland is the Irish Wildbird Conservancy. He was one of the prime moving forces behind the amalgamation of the Irish Society for the Protection of Birds, the Irish Ornithologists' Club and the Irish Wildfowl Conservancy to form the new organisation in 1968. This was an extremely sensible move, uniting the conservation and ornithological bodies under a single council and with a forceful executive committee of which John was secretary until 1972 and then chairman until his departure for Brussels in 1974. At the same time as he was playing a central role in the organisation politics which inevitably precedes the unification of several independent bodies, he was researching wildlife conservation legislation. The results were incorporated in detailed recommendations which were eventually agreed by all the Irish sporting and conservation bodies and formed the basis of the Irish Wildlife Act, 1976.

His interests have ranged well beyond Ireland. As early as 1967, he started, with Peter Conder, the successful series of All-Ireland Conferences run jointly by the IWC and the RSPB (and remembers with particular pleasure his close teamwork with that unrepentant Scot, Frank Hamilton). As council member of the BTO as well as the IWC, he played a major part in securing the co-operation of both bodies in the triumphant Atlas project, and he moved into international conservation when he became secretary of the Irish section of the ICBP in 1965.

Although his greatest interest appears to be conservation, John enjoys fieldwork. He visited Saltee Bird Observatory regularly in the 1950s, but he

says himself that he is not interested in just watching birds or looking for rarities. He prefers to study birds scientifically for a specific project. In recent years in Ireland, his fieldwork has been concentrated on monitoring the Peregrine population (1967-73), the Atlas (1968-72) and most recently the IWC's wildfowl and wader count project. One of us has been in the field with him on a number of occasions and can vouch for his enthusiasm and energy in travelling long distances to ensure thorough coverage.

In Belgium, he has continued such field studies, including participating fully in their Atlas project. But he has also played a key part in the development of European conservation. As a member of the expert working group which drafted the basic principles of the proposed EEC directive on bird conservation, he displayed both his legal expertise and his passionate concern for wider conservation issues. The directive has now been adopted and will lead not only to a tightening of the standards of bird protection of the nine countries involved, but also to a major increase in the emphasis placed on habitat conservation, with all that that implies for every kind of wildlife.

It is hard to believe that John's keen interest in the Irish scene will ever evaporate: over the last four years, as a council member and trustee of the IWC, he has bombarded his colleagues with letters and memoranda from Brussels, at times with a frequency disturbing to those unable to match his commitment. Yet many will hope that his knowledge of international conservation problems and his quiet but relentless advocacy will be used to the full in the testing years ahead.

CLIVE HUTCHINSON and STANLEY CRAMP

Mystery photographs

38 Most—if not all—species have a characteristic field appearance derived from a combination of plumage, stance and behaviour (including gait, wing movements, degree of shyness, preferred habitat and so on). However well illustrated field guides may be, there is, therefore, no substitute for actually seeing a species in the flesh in its natural environment. Some photographs, however, can capture a bird in such a typical pose that someone unfamiliar with the species gains knowledge of its jizz which will prove useful when it is encountered for the first time. Last month's mystery photograph (plate 5), part of which is repeated here, was one such valuable photographic portrait.

Newcomers to seawatching with little experience of the large shearwaters sometimes find it difficult to identify distant individuals. One problem is that—unlike Great Shearwater *Puffinus gravis*—Cory's Shearwater *Calonectris diomedea* lacks major distinctive features (see *Brit. Birds* 71: plate 88). 'Large shearwaters' at long range,



therefore, with few features observed, are regarded as 'probable Cory's' or 'unidentified Great/Cory's'; in fact the majority are usually Fulmars *Fulmarus glacialis*, which, especially in gale or near-gale conditions, tower in the manner often said to be diagnostic of Cory's Shearwater, but which Great also adopts in such weather (*Brit. Birds* 61: 571-572). The Great Shearwater does sometimes have quicker, stiffer wingbeats than those of the generally more langorous Cory's, but flight appearance varies with wind direction and force and sea conditions. The Great Shearwater does, however, have very distinctive characteristics which are visible at long range or in the appalling drizzling misty conditions in which they most often come close inshore. Most of these features are shown perfectly in Frank Wille's photograph of two Great Shearwaters off Greenland in July 1975 (plate 5). The clearly defined dark cap contrasts with the white cheek and throat and looks as if it is tipped forward; the dark bill is also an easy distinction from Cory's. Dark shoulder marks, which recall those of a Black Tern *Chlidonias niger* in juvenile or winter plumage, emphasise the white which usually extends as a complete collar around behind the black cap. In close views, or in good visibility, it may be possible to observe that Great has mainly blackish outer wing and secondary bar, contrasting with the generally brownish remainder of the upperwing; on Cory's, the inner wing lacks the contrasting darker trailing edge. Cory's, as well as Great, may have white on its uppertail-coverts, so this field character is valueless; the Great's diagnostic dark belly patch is seen in field-guide paintings far more often than on a living bird offshore. The mainly white underwing of Great Shearwater often shows blackish markings on the axillaries and flanks, lacking in Cory's. The head pattern, however, is so clear that identification should seldom be a problem. JTRS

24. Mystery photograph 39. Identify the species. Answer next month



Notes

White-tailed Black Storks During a visit to Yugoslavia and Greece in summer 1978, we recorded three aberrantly coloured Black Storks *Ciconia nigra*.

On 18th June, one of three Black Storks soaring above the Babuna Gorge in southern Yugoslavia had completely white and semi-transparent rectrices, but was otherwise quite normal. Two weeks later, at Meteora in Greece (220 km south of Babuna Gorge), we saw five more soaring Black Storks. To our surprise, two were white-tailed. Unlike the one at Babuna, however, these each had the central pair of rectrices completely black. Thus, three out of eight observed Black Storks were white-tailed; all were adults with red legs.

We have found no reference to this aberrant plumage in the literature and we have speculated that it might be the result of a locally common recessive gene. JAN OLSSON, ROLAND ASTERLING and LARS LARSSON
Pennygangen 3, S-414 82 Göteborg, Sweden



A vagrant Black Stork with a white tail might have been looked at askance by a rarities committee. Some species exhibit partial albinism fairly frequently and we do not normally publish records of a plumage aberration unless it introduces an identification problem. Eds

Communal roosting by Wrens In January-March 1979, at Lydney, Gloucestershire, we discovered a roost of Wrens *Troglodytes troglodytes* in the

Table 1. Numbers of Wrens *Troglodytes troglodytes* recorded at roost in Forest of Dean, Gloucestershire, 1979

No counts were made during 18th-22nd February or 4th-5th March;
* = birds already leaving; ** = bad visibility

Date	No. of Wrens counted	Approx. temperature at roosting time (°C)	Date	No. of Wrens counted	Approx. temperature at roosting time (°C)
30th Jan.	'c. 2 dozen'	0	14th Feb.	95	-2 - -3
31st Jan.	41	0	15th Feb.	96	-2 - -3
1st Feb.	11	3	16th Feb.	88	0
2nd Feb.	63	0	17th Feb.	80	1
3rd Feb.	48	0	23rd Feb.	40	4 (falling)
4th Feb.	70	0	24th Feb.	31	4 (falling)
5th Feb.	70	0	25th Feb.	35**	0-1
6th Feb.	78	0	26th Feb.	46	1-2 (falling)
7th Feb.	72	1	27th Feb.	27**	6
8th Feb.	84	2	28th Feb.	45	1
9th Feb.	68	1	1st Mar.	31	6.5
10th Feb.	87	0-1 (snowing)	2nd Mar.	8	11
11th Feb.	94	1-2	3rd Mar.	4	10 (windy and raining)
12th Feb.	87	1	15th Mar.	46	0-1 (snowing)
13th Feb.	61*	3	16th Mar.	48	0-1 (snowing)

loft of our house in the Forest of Dean. (The house stands alone, but there are two cottages 50 m away and a group of cottages 400 m away.) The Wrens entered the roost through a hole in the fascia just under the overhanging roof slates at the corner of the house. After entry they were not visible, as there is a bend in the passage to the roosting cavity, but dead leaves and other nesting material just inside the hole could be clearly seen even from the ground. The fibreglass insulation in the loft prevented their being seen from inside. Arrivals occurred during a period of 25 to 45 minutes from dusk to almost dark; counting was difficult, as at times the Wrens arrived in such numbers that they had to line up to enter, and some even flew back to the hedge for a while. The highest total was 96 on 15th February, but the counts of arrivals (table 1) may have understated actual numbers. Departures were just as it was getting light, again over a similar period.

VERA M. HAYNES

Western Lodge, Parkend, Lydney, Gloucester GL154JQ

About 25 years ago, in the Benenden area of Kent, the grey squirrel *Sciurus carolinensis* had increased alarmingly. Before going abroad, I decided to try to reduce their numbers. I knew that, as the weather was cold, the squirrels would be sheltering in their dreys. I therefore asked a friend to accompany me, armed with a long pole, and poke them out. From one of the dreys, only 6-7 m from the ground, instead of a squirrel, there came pouring from the side entrance a veritable cascade of panic-stricken small birds. As these did not disperse immediately, my companion was able to count them: he found that no fewer than 17 Wrens had been crowded together inside that abandoned drey.

COLLINGWOOD INGRAM

The Grange, Benenden, Cranbrook, Kent TN174DN

On 17th February 1979, two days after the heaviest snow of the winter and in severe frost, I noticed a roost of Wrens in a suburban garden in north London. The roost was in a nestbox about 4 m from the ground in an old apple tree. Blue Tits *Parus caeruleus* have nested in the box for several years, but do not roost in it. Nor do Wrens normally roost in the box, although it is within the territory of one pair. My diary of the roost is as follows:

17th February Temperature (Central London): max. 0°C, min. -2°C. Six Wrens entered box in late afternoon.

18th February Temperature: max. 1°C, min. -1°C; sunset 17.19 GMT. Unable to observe roost dispersal in morning; 11 Wrens entered box between 16.56 and 17.25 hrs.

19th February Temperature: max. 2°C, min. 0°C; sunrise 07.09, sunset 17.21. At 07.00, four Wrens were in the trees and very soon left; the others had already gone. Between 17.15 and 17.21, 11 Wrens entered box.

20th February Temperature: max. 4°C, min. 2°C; sunrise 07.06, sunset 17.23. Between 06.40 and 06.46, 11 Wrens left box; between 17.23 and 17.28, five entered box.

21st February Temperature: max. 4°C, min. 0°C; sunrise 07.04, sunset 17.24. Between 06.42 and 06.44, five Wrens left box; at 17.30, three entered box.

22nd February Temperature: max. 7°C, min. 1°C; sunrise 07.02. Between 06.38 and 06.40, three Wrens left box. None arrived in afternoon.

The relationship between sunrise and sunset and times of dispersal from and arrival at the roost are interesting, but the most intriguing aspect is the mechanism by which the roost is established, as Wrens are otherwise never

gregarious. It may be assumed that the Wrens in my garden were the first to use the box for roosting, although why they did so is a puzzle. If the box was warmer than the normal roost, why was it not always used? If there was a need to accommodate numbers greater than the normal roost could, how did this need come about? How was the existence of the roost communicated to other Wrens? It is possible that communication was radial from territory to territory. An even more difficult question is whether the establishment of a communal roost indicates an element of altruism. If there is no survival value in building up a roost to the size of some that have been recorded (see above), altruism cannot be ruled out.

JOHN K. WARD

57 Wise Lane, Mill Hill, London NW7

Wren apparently building winter roosting-nest On 22nd January 1979, I found a newly built nest of a Wren *Troglodytes troglodytes* 144 cm above ground level in a herring-bone cotoneaster *Cotoneaster horizontalis* trained up a north-facing wall of my house at Blunham, Bedfordshire. The nest had not been present when the cotoneaster was trimmed in October nor when it was sprayed against woolly aphid *Eriosoma lanigerum* in November and again on 26th December. It was very obvious against the wall and, although I did not see the process of nest-building, I believe that it must have occurred between 9th and 21st January, when I was ill and did not leave the house. On the first occasion that I passed the site after this, I found the nest.

At 20.00 GMT on 22nd January, the nest was packed to capacity with Wrens: it was so full that the tail and posterior one-quarter of the body of the last one in were protruding from the entrance; I estimated that at least ten individuals were roosting in the nest. At this point, however, I did not brave the icy conditions of dawn or dusk to watch them entering or leaving. On 30th January, after Michael W. Richards had photographed the nest (plate 25), I did attempt such a count, but none was using the nest, which then contained one dead Wren.

The weather during January 1979 was cold, with frost and snow: more severe in Bedfordshire than in any winter since 1962/63. The nest was, thus, clearly built as a roosting-nest and was not an instance of early building of a breeding-nest in mild spring-like weather.

I have been unable to find any reference to the building of roosting-nests by Wrens, although Cullen (1964) noted that 'some of the American species [of wrens (*Troglodytidae*)] build special roosting nests (as the Bananaquit *Coereba flaveola* is also reported to do).'

In his detailed monograph on the Wren, Armstrong (1955) could quote apparent roosting-nest construction by only one species in the genus *Troglodytes*: the Sclater Brown-throated Wren *T. brunneicollis*. He commented that: 'It is rather surprising that the fashioning of a nest specifically for roosting is characteristic of the birds of warm regions rather than those of the arctic, sub-arctic or temperate regions' and also concluded from the numbers and variety of covered nests in equatorial forests that a domed or roofed nest was 'evolved in the tropics as a protection from predators, [but] now provides the Wren in north temperate regions with a warm refuge from frost and



25. Roosting-nest of Wren *Troglodytes troglodytes*, Bedfordshire, January 1979 (Michael W. Richards)

snow.' Although not stating it in so many words, the late Rev. Armstrong's text seems to imply that he found it surprising that roosting-nests were unknown in the case of *Troglodytes troglodytes*. I believe that, although the Blunham roosting-nest is apparently the only one on record, the habit could be normal. Had I not examined the cotoneaster very closely on earlier occasions in the winter, I might well have dismissed this roosting-nest as a cock's-nest built in the previous summer and overlooked in the intervening months. Perhaps winter roosting-nests are constructed regularly, not only by Wrens, but also by other species which habitually roost in such sites.

J. T. R. SHARROCK

Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3NJ

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Another aberrant Robin resembling Red-flanked Bluetail As a sequel to K. Preston's notes on occurrences of aberrant Robins *Erithacus rubecula* with the appearance of Red-flanked Bluetails *Tarsiger cyanurus* (*Brit. Birds* 72: 231-233), I can record a similar bird which I watched for five minutes at Holme Bird Observatory, Norfolk, on 30th September 1979.

At 16.00 GMT in good light and at close range, I watched a small passerine with flycatcher-like characteristics perched at the bottom of a young fir tree in the sand-dunes. It differed from a nearby immature Redstart *Phoenicurus phoenicurus* by having a relatively shorter tail and more upright stance, as well as by its distinctive plumage. It was essentially grey above with a white forehead, white eye-ring and white breast. Its behaviour was reminiscent of a flycatcher (Muscicapidae), with frequent tail-flicking. The following description is compiled from my field notes taken at the time:

Forehead, eye-ring, throat and breast white (breast lightly washed orange-buff). Flanks and belly grey-brown. Undertail-coverts white. Crown, nape and mantle uniform grey-brown, with bluish wash on crown. Tail and wings olive-brown, with paler edgings to greater coverts forming a subtle wingbar. Bill dark, with paler base to lower mandible. Legs dark.



Fig. 1. Aberrant Robin *Erithacus rubecula*, Norfolk, September 1979 (R. L. K. Jolliffe)

During the day, there had been a fresh northeasterly wind, and an appreciable fall of Robins. It occurred to me that this bird might be an aberrant Robin, but I did not discount other species, including Red-flanked Bluetail. It was only later, after reading K. Preston's notes and his accompanying photographs, that I was left in no doubt that this bird was indeed an aberrant Robin with strikingly close similarities to those which occurred in Ireland in the Octobers of 1973 and 1974.

R. L. K. JOLLIFFE

18 Westhawe, Bretton, Peterborough

Siberian Rubythroat in Lincolnshire On 14th October 1977 a light SSE wind at Donna Nook, Lincolnshire, replaced the southwesterlies of the previous few days. Hazy sunshine was accompanied by a slight sea-mist. Totals of migrants in the area were only moderate, involving chiefly Starlings *Sturnus vulgaris*, Redwings *Turdus iliacus*, and Goldcrests *Regulus regulus*. As I returned to my car at about 11.00 GMT, my attention was drawn to a small bird perched on an old reinforcing-bar protruding from a heap of concrete rubble about 60 m away. Through binoculars, I was able to examine the bird for about three minutes. During this period, I slowly moved towards it and ultimately watched it preening some 20 m from me. Eventually, it flew across to a patch of elders *Sambucus nigra* in the centre of a dense thicket of sea-buckthorn *Hippophae rhamnoides*. As I was in no doubt that this was a species completely new and unfamiliar to me, I made the following notes:

Size comparable to Bluethroat *Luscinia svecica*; build more closely resembling slim Wheatear *Oenanthe oenanthe*. Most striking plumage feature: bold, creamy-white super-

cilium, which extended well past eye but not as far as nape, contrasting with dark brown ear-coverts. Submoustachial stripe of same colour as supercilium, but less conspicuous,

probably due to supercilium being surrounded by larger darker areas of feathering. Thin, dark malar stripe separating submoustachial stripe from off-white chin and throat. Breast pale greyish-brown, extending onto flanks, but becoming paler on belly and almost white on ventral region. Upperparts, including wings, fairly uniform grey-brown, although crown, nape and tail slightly

browner. Bill appeared black; legs pale brown. Wings long and pointed, extending well beyond base of tail, which was square-ended and about one-third of total length. When perched, bird had very upright stance, with tail held in line with angle of back. No flicking of wings or tail. Flight strong, but somewhat jerky, seeming to slow down well before bird about to land.

After an absence of about 15 minutes, the bird reappeared for a minute, only to vanish once more. About 90 minutes later, it was seen very briefly for the last time, when it returned to the rubble for a few seconds. From the notes obtained, I was able to identify it as a Siberian Rubythroat *Luscinia calliope*, the second record for Britain and Ireland: the first occurred on Fair Isle, Shetland, on 9th to 11th October 1975 (*Brit. Birds* 72: 89-94).

R. LORAND

Stonechat Cottage, Sea Lane, North Coates, Grimsby, South Humberside

Fifty years ago . . .

From 'DOUBLE-BROODING OF THE NIGHTJAR' by David L. Lack. 'Mr. Jourdain states that the Nightjar (*Caprimulgus e. europaeus*) is undoubtedly sometimes double-brooded. Most earlier works said that the bird was never double-brooded, and only reared two broods if the first had been destroyed. My own observations indicate that the bird not occasionally, but normally, rears two broods during the summer.' (*Brit. Birds* 23: 242, February 1930)

Request

Records for the north coast region of Northern Ireland A report is planned for the north coast region of Northern Ireland, covering the period from January 1975 to December 1979, to be published by the New University of Ulster Bird Club. The region is north of a line from Torr Head, Co. Antrim, to Strabane, Co. Londonderry, and east of the River Foyle, including Lough Foyle and Rathlin Island. A detailed map of the region can be obtained from the address below. All records, which will be acknowledged in the report, should be sent to P. S. Watson, School of Biological and Environmental Studies, New University of Ulster, Coleraine, Co. Londonderry, Northern Ireland.

News and comment

Peter Conder and Mike Everett

Good news from Malta The Government of Malta has at last agreed to lease the Ghadira Pool to the Ornithological Society for the benefit of both passage and breeding birds: this will enable the Society to develop it as a reserve. Bert Axell, formerly at Minsmere and now Land Use Adviser with the RSPB, has visited Malta and has drawn up a detailed report with recommendations which has been forwarded to the Govern-

ment. Given the necessary funds, an attractive educational field centre can also be established at the reserve. Ghadira is the only freshwater pool remaining on the islands and is therefore highly attractive to passage waders and ducks. The shooting rights have been leased by custom to a local 'sportsman', but much unauthorised shooting has gone on as well. Within half-an-hour, I once saw an Avocet *Recurvirostra avosetta* and a godwit

Limosa shot, bundled up in brown paper and hurriedly carried away.

Objective number one of the Ornithological Society (founded as the Malta Ornithological Society in 1962 with the co-operation of the Malta Bird Reserves Overseas Committee) has always been the protection of birds on Malta. By establishing an effective reserve at Ghadira, it hopes to teach the public to enjoy the pleasures of birdwatching rather than the outmoded sport of slaughtering birds. All that is needed now is cash for the development of the area and the appointment of a warden. We hope that grants will be forthcoming from various sources in the not-too-distant future, but, meanwhile, the MBROC has already made a start by showing a RSPB film at the University Science Museum in Oxford and a letter of appeal to its members. If you would like to help, please send a donation to the MBROC Treasurer, Mrs Ann Hardman, Red Hill House, Alcester, Warwicks. (Contributed by Mrs Betty Coxon)

‘Dutch Birding’ Notwithstanding increasing travel costs, transcontinental twitching could be the coming thing; judging by the impressive tally of records for the Netherlands detailed in the second issue of *Dutch Birding* (Nos. 2/3, October 1979), that country could soon be high on the list of Places to Go. There is a lot of material in Dutch this time, but there are English summaries of the most important contributions; these include notes on rare geese in the Netherlands last winter and on the influx of Great Bustards *Otis tarda* there and in Belgium in 1978/79, to name but two. There is also a really good ‘Mystery Bird’ competition, along the same lines as our own feature. Perhaps the best thing about this second issue, though, is its greatly improved appearance: it begins to look and feel like a real bird journal, and some of the photographs are superb.

Severe weather bans In the midst of much dithering and general argument as to whether the January weather in 1979 really *was* leading to difficulties and death for many wildfowl and waders, the RSPB had the guts to go it alone and make a successful approach to the Government for a ban on shooting. The aftermath has been a long sequence of argument and recrimination, during which one could be forgiven for assuming that the interests of birds was fairly low on the list of priorities: all that, unpleasant though it was,

is now history. What is encouraging is that a positive step forward has been taken, with the Nature Conservancy Council, the Department of the Environment, the Wildfowling Association of Great Britain and Ireland, the RSPB, the BTO, the Wildfowl Trust and the Game Conservancy agreeing criteria and procedures for making such decisions in future, based on objective data on the state of the ground from 13 selected meteorological stations around the British Isles. If more than half the stations report frozen ground or snow cover for a period of one week, sportsmen will be alerted to their responsibilities; if the freezing weather lasts for 14 days, the Secretary of State for the Environment will sign an Order prohibiting shooting for a period not exceeding 14 days. For the sake of the birds, let’s hope it works better next time . . .

In Memoriam? We noticed an advert recently stating that Dartington, of Totnes, Devon, is issuing a limited-edition glass mug (which looks very nice) bearing a picture of a Dodo *Raphus cucullatus* and the date 1680, to commemorate (if that’s the right word) the tercentenary of the extinction of one of the world’s most famous birds. It seems somebody has been a bit slack with his homework: the Dodo is generally reckoned to have survived until 1681 (when it was mentioned by Capt. William Talbot) at least, although it does not feature in the 1693 list of the endemic birds of Mauritius drawn up by François Leguat.

Swanwick again The BTO Annual Conference was held at Swanwick from 30th November to 1st December. For the first time, it was not oversubscribed, perhaps because some of the ‘regulars’ were not attracted by the programme of lectures, which at first sight certainly seemed a bit uninspiring. In the event, it turned out to be as interesting and as well-presented as ever. Stanley Cramp gave the eleventh Witherby Memorial Lecture, eloquently outlining the amateur and professional contributions to ‘Ornithology and Bird Conservation’. ‘Nottinghamshire Canada Geese’ seemed singularly unlikely to draw any crowds, but in fact proved to be a first-class lecture, excellently delivered by David Parkin. There must be a message here somewhere: the meat of this conference *was* good, but perhaps the BTO needed to advertise and package it better? Although the attendance at

Swanwick was rather lower than usual, it was encouraging to see a lot of new faces. Like all conferences, 'the BTO' has become increasingly clique-ridden over the years: hopefully the infusion of some new blood will start to break this down . . . if it doesn't lead to the formation of new cliques instead!

Of the 69 entrants in the usual *BB* mystery photographs competition, 27 correctly identified the five pictures: Joan Allen, J. K. Baker, Bryan Bland, Martin Davies, Ian Dawson, Kay Daykin, K. Doney, David

Fisher, Jim Flegg, Anthony Fox, Roy Frost, A. Grieve, J. S. Griffith, Chris Harbard, Richard Holden, Elizabeth Loosmore, P. A. Hyde, Tim Inskipp, Brian Minshull, Jon Nuttall, Giles Pepler, Keith Sutton, Moss Taylor, Alan Walker, Frederick J. Watson, M. G. Wilson and C. E. Wright. The resulting draw was won by Alan Walker, who was presented with the traditional bottle of champagne by Lorna Sharrock. (Contributed by Richard Porter)

Opinions expressed in this feature are not necessarily those of the editors of British Birds

Recent reports

K. Allsopp and R. A. Hume

These are largely unchecked reports, not authenticated records

This report covers November, with some October and early December records; except where otherwise stated, all dates refer to November.

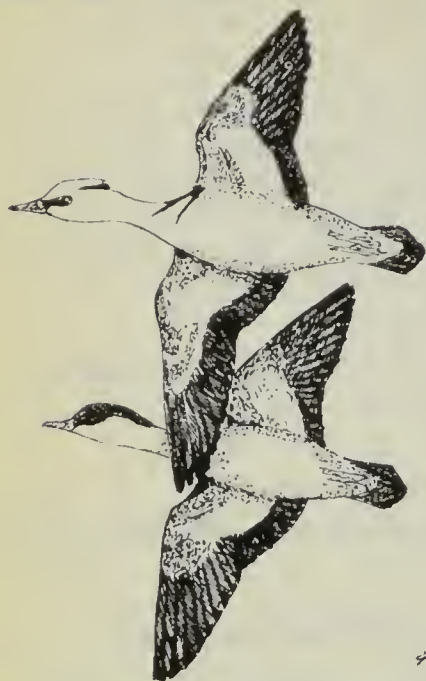
In contrast to October's easterly weather, westerly winds dominated November, with some gale-force winds on occasion. In mid month, pressure rose in the south, bringing some overnight frost and fog on clear nights, but no really severe conditions. A week of strong northerly winds in Icelandic sea areas early in the month may have displaced northern seabirds to the south, with their arrival in English west coast areas after strong westerlies. **Little Auks** *Alle alle*, usually very scarce in the southwest, were reported along the Channel coast from the Isle of Wight westward, with 114 at Porthgarra (Cornwall) on 11th. A few were found inland, including one picked up in woodland at Troon (Strathclyde) on 18th and returned to the sea, and six at Byfield Reservoir (Northamptonshire). A further nine occurred at Barrow Haven (Humberside) on 10th. An adult **Great Northern Diver** *Gavia immer*, just moulting into winter plumage, was found at Thornton Reservoir (Leicestershire) on 10th: a change from the usual drab immatures found inland. **Grey Phalaropes** *Phalaropus fulicarius*, which often get driven inshore by westerly gales, were not greatly affected: only two were reported, at Aberaeron (Dyfed) on 8th and at Lodmoor (Dorset) in early December. Seabird rarities reported were a second October **White-billed Diver** *Gavia adamsii* at Hascosay

(Shetland) on 21st and, of great interest, a large *Sterna*-type **tern** with a yellow bill at Kenfig Pool (Mid Glamorgan) on 24th; the specific identification remains to be resolved. Scattered reports of **Mediterranean Gulls** *Larus melanocephalus* came from Barrow Haven on 31st October, Radipole Lake (Dorset) on 26th and two localities in Ireland.

Wildfowl

The arrival of a male **Barrow's Goldeneye** *Bucephala islandica* at Irvine (Strathclyde), seen from 4th, followed a very strong westerly airflow, which suggests that it may well have been a genuine vagrant. Whatever status it is eventually given, it was nevertheless an exciting duck to see. Perhaps it will remain to winter and return each year like the **King Eiders** *Somateria spectabilis* which have turned up again at Loch Ryan (Dumfries & Galloway) and at Greenock (Strathclyde). A **Steller's Eider** *Polysticta stelleri* was reported at North Ronaldsay (Orkney) on 20th October. Normally seen only offshore, a **Surf Scoter** *Melanitta perspicillata* was found inland on Loch Insh (Highland) on 4th October. Other Nearctic ducks seen were a **Ring-necked Duck** *Aythya collaris* at Lurgan Park Lake (Co. Armagh) on 18th, a **Blue-winged Teal** *Anas discors* on Chew Valley Lake (Avon) also on 18th, **Black Ducks** *A. rubripes* at Wheldrake (North Yorkshire) in the last week of the month and at Shane's Castle (Co. Antrim) on 1st December, and a Teal *A. crecca* of the race *carolinensis* at North Bull

(Dublin). **Smews** *Mergus albellus*, which in Britain and Northern Ireland normally



winter on English southeastern waters, were found at Doonfoot (Strathclyde) on 13th (one) and on Loch Neagh (Co. Armagh) in mid November (three). Three **Long-tailed Ducks** *Clangula hyemalis* in Poole Harbour (Dorset) on 29th and a further two at Sutton Bingham Reservoir (Somerset) on 18th suggest an unusual southwesterly pattern of occurrences. A **Ferruginous Duck** *Aythya nyroca* was found at Lurgan Park Lake on 18th.

Wading birds

With the first recorded appearance of a **Greater Sand Plover** *Charadrius leschenaultii* in Britain only last winter, further records might seem unlikely. Not so: one appeared at Chew Valley Lake on 17th and stayed long enough for the nation's observers to refresh their memories and those few who had missed last year's event to catch up. A notable record of a commoner species was of 20 **Jack Snipes** *Limnocryptes minimus* at Prestwick (Strathclyde) on 3rd. An immature **Spoonbill** *Platalea leucorodia*, which should have been in West Africa for the winter, was found at Theale Gravel-pits (Berkshire) on 14th and 15th.

Bird of the month

The biggest surprise this month was the discovery of a **Belted Kingfisher** *Ceryle alcyon* at Wadebridge (Cornwall) on 25th. This follows the first accepted occurrence in Ireland last autumn/winter and earlier

European records from the Netherlands and Iceland. One long-unaccepted English record dates from 1908, when an unknown bird was collected and identified only in 1918 as a Belted Kingfisher (*Brit. Birds* 12: 216). The remarkable coincidence is that that individual was also found near Wadebridge and in November. The BOU Records Committee has now, after over 70 years, given that record its blessing. The November 1979 individual will, if accepted, become the third record for Britain and Ireland. This large, noisy, distinctive species is common in North America, moving to the southern United States in winter.

Passerine vagrants

A further autumn record of a **Pallas's Warbler** *Phylloscopus proregulus* occurred at Dungeness (Kent) on 13th, during a period of calm anticyclonic conditions. In the same area, in nearby woods, two **Two-barred Crossbills** *Loxia leucoptera* have been found during the month. Late records of autumn migrants included a **Swallow** *Hirundo rustica* at Irvine on 13th and an immature **Red-backed Shrike** *Lanius collurio* at Sydenham



(Belfast) from 20th to 24th. Two **Nutcrackers** *Nucifraga caryocatactes* were reported: one at Milford (Staffordshire) on 1st and another at Nottingham on 18th.

Latest news

In mid January: two **Ring-necked Ducks**, Totnes (Devon); **Ferruginous Duck**, Harleston (Suffolk); **Pomarine Skua** *Stercorarius pomarinus*, Walberswick (Suffolk); **Black Guillemots** *Cepphus grylle* on freshwater pools, Cley (Norfolk) and Walberswick; a dozen or so **Waxwings** *Bombycilla garrulus*, Guisborough (Cleveland); **Two-barred Crossbill**, Cannock (Staffordshire); **Serinus** *Serinus serinus*, Stanpit (Hampshire).

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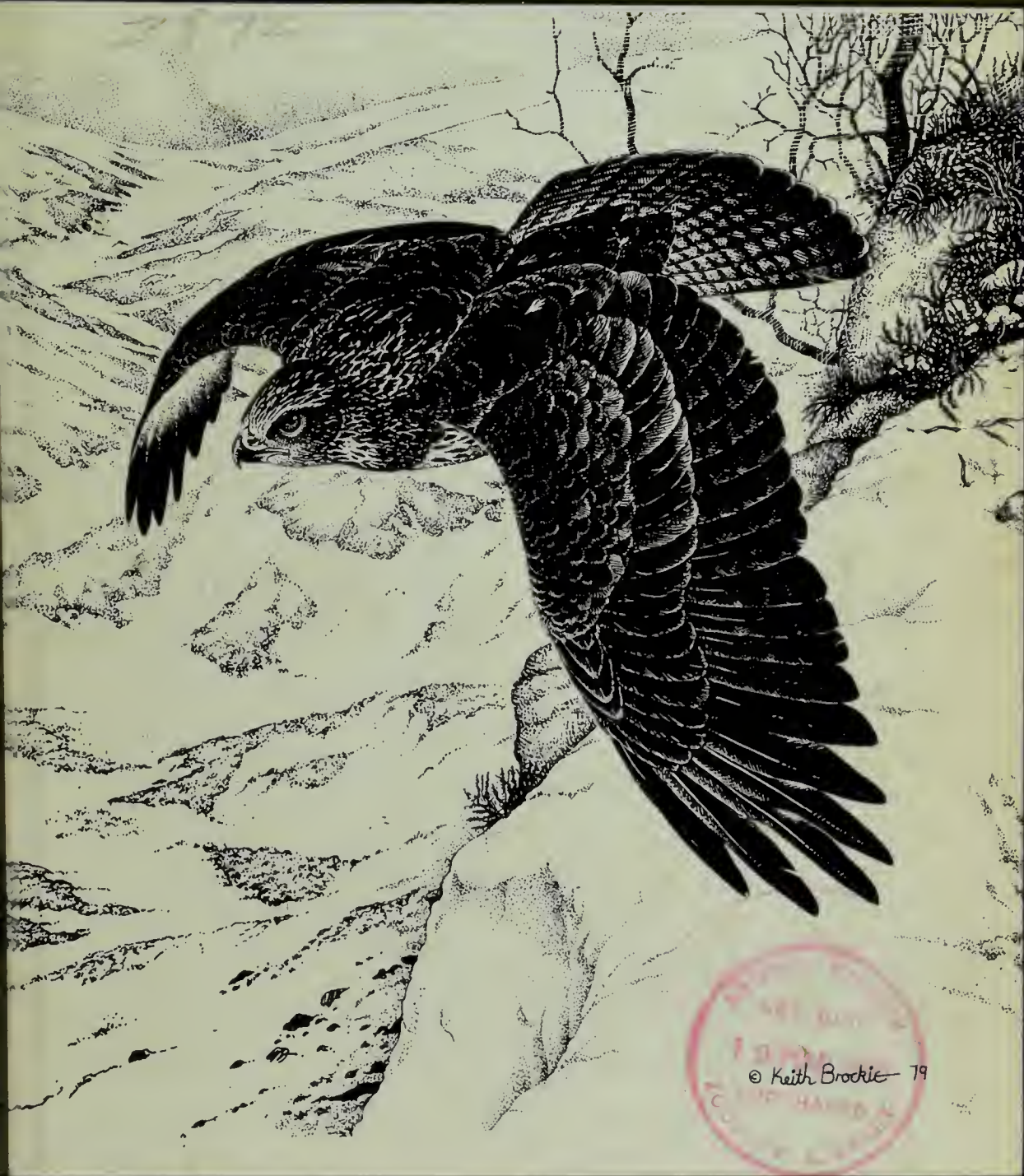
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Volume 73 Number 3 March 1980



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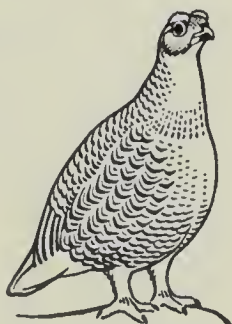
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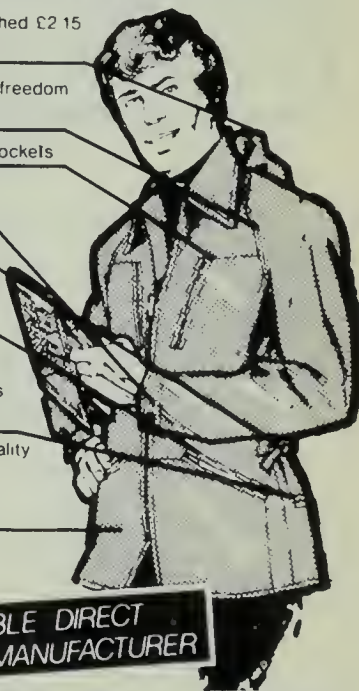
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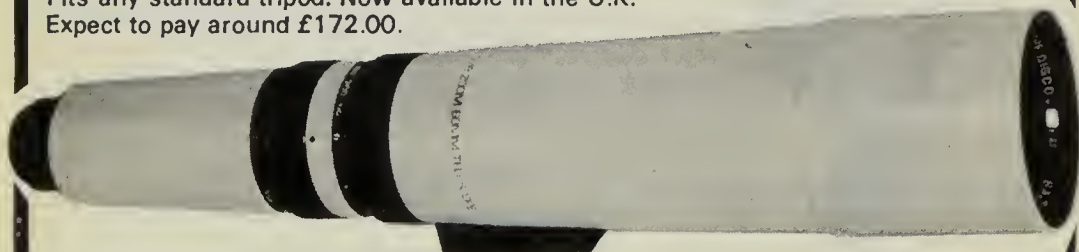
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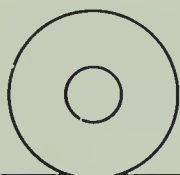
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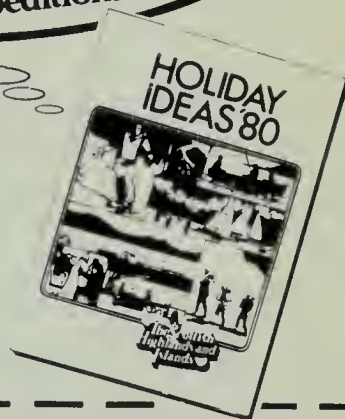
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British Birds

VOLUME 73 NUMBER 3 MARCH 1980

Field identification of west Palearctic gulls

P. J. Grant

Part 3. Audouin's, Herring, Lesser Black-backed, Great Black-backed and Great Black-headed Gulls



Parts 1 and 2 have appeared previously in this journal (*Brit. Birds* 71: 145-176; 72: 142-182). The five species covered in part 3 are grouped because of their large size and similarity especially in juvenile and first-year plumages. Glaucous *Larus hyperboreus* and Iceland Gulls *L. glaucoides* (part 5) are the only other west Palearctic species of similar size, but are readily separated from this group by the lack of black or brown on wings and tail at all ages.

The identification of juveniles and first-years is often difficult, requiring reasonable views and practice. Some adult mantle coloration is usually acquired during the second year, making identification easier, but in these and even in third-year and adult plumages the separation of the two similar pairs (Herring *L. argentatus*/Audouin's *L. audouinii*, and Lesser Black-backed *L. fuscus*/Great Black-backed *L. marinus*) remains difficult at long range.

The ageing of large gulls is less straightforward than is generally the case for smaller species: the longer period of immaturity gives a potential for individual plumage variation which increases with each successive moult. Juveniles, first-winters and first-summerers can generally be aged with certainty, mainly because the retained juvenile wings and tail have a relatively standard pattern. There is, however, an overlap in the appearance of a few advanced second-years and retarded third-years, and a much greater overlap between advanced third-years and retarded fourth-years and older. The transition from the mainly dull-coloured juvenile bill to full adult coloration is similarly variable: first-years have a relatively standard bill colour and pattern, but second- and third-years display great variation, generally of little help to ageing.

It is usually believed that large gulls typically acquire adult plumage in their fourth winter, but it is well known that some may still show traces of immaturity at that age or even subsequently. Monaghan & Duncan (1979) described three breeding Herring Gulls, ringed as nestlings and known to be in their fourth summer: one was adult (as would be expected at that age), but two had extensive dark markings on the outer primary coverts and

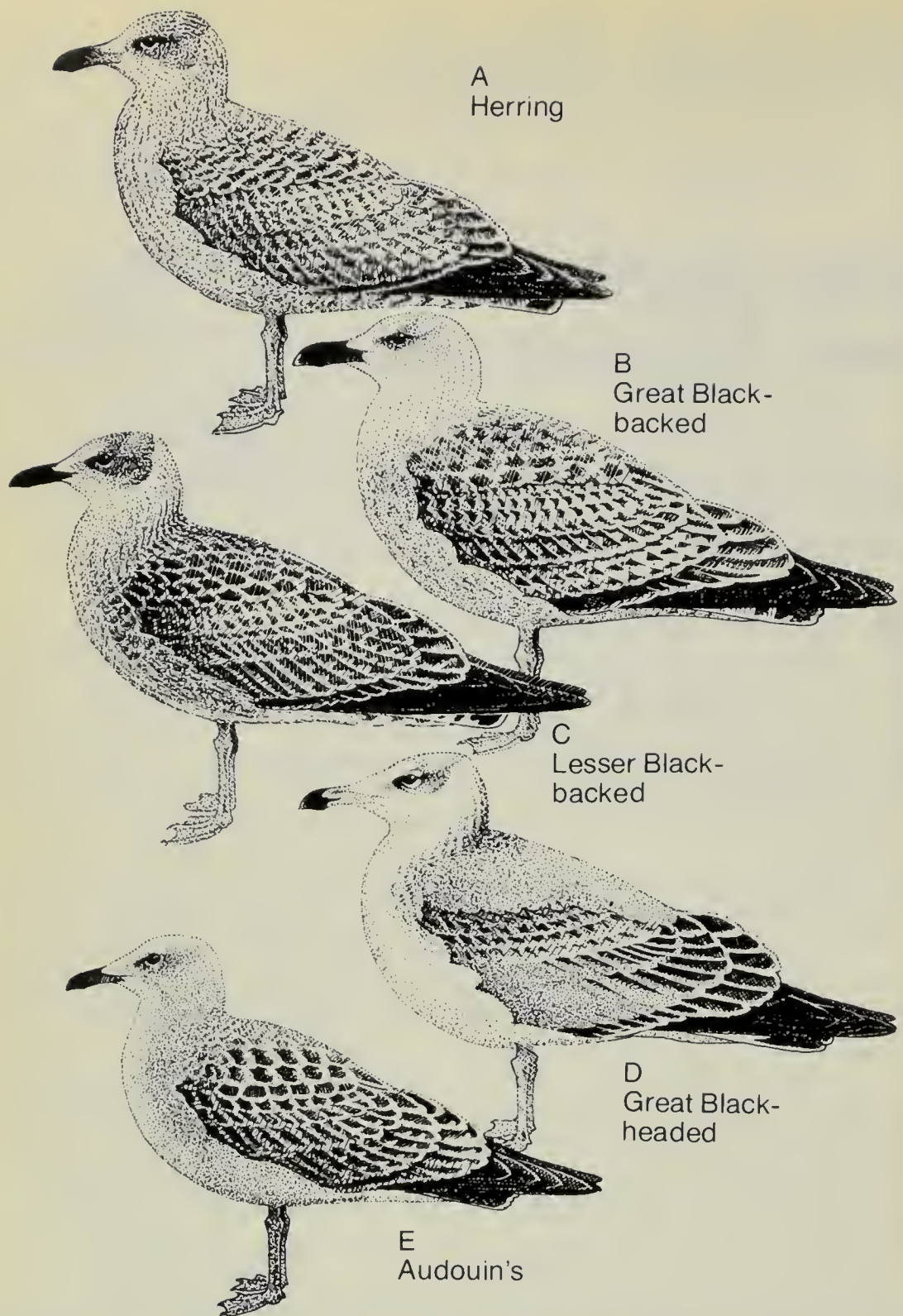


Fig. 23. First-winter Herring *Larus argentatus*, Great Black-backed *L. marinus*, Lesser Black-backed *L. fuscus*, Great Black-headed *L. ichthyaetus* and Audouin's Gulls *L. audouinii*, showing comparative sizes, shapes and stances

alula, and a faint tail band, features usually considered to indicate third-year plumage. It seems likely that all large gulls—not only Herring Gulls—may be subject to similar variation. It should thus be borne in mind that the illustrations and descriptions of immatures given here represent what are thought to be typical examples. In practice, the ageing, at least of individuals with plumage intermediate between those described for second- and third-years, and all those with plumage resembling that described for

third-years, should be tentative: use of such terms as 'second- or third-year' and 'third-year type' is suggested to describe them.

More information based on ringed birds of known age is needed to ascertain the extent of variation in the length of immaturity and varying appearance at different ages of large gulls.

In summer, when a combination of worn, faded plumage and the start of the complete autumn moult frequently produces a generally nondescript appearance, the ageing of immature large gulls may be particularly difficult, although detailed examination of the patterns of adjacent new and old primaries (on trapped birds, for example) can provide extra clues to age.

Herring (fig. 26), Lesser Black-backed (fig. 28) and Great Black-backed Gulls (fig. 30)—in order of descending general abundance—are familiar in most of the west Palearctic. Immatures provide an identification challenge, and more attention to flocks of large gulls—and familiarisation with the identification of immatures—could lead to further European records of Audouin's (fig. 24) and Great Black-headed Gulls *L. ichthyaetus* (fig. 32), and a more complete knowledge of their status within their known ranges.

The subspecies of Herring and Lesser Black-backed Gulls are discussed and described under 'Geographical variation' after the detailed descriptions. While typical examples are identifiable in the field, there is a good deal of intergradation in appearance, and caution is advisable in assigning individuals to a particular subspecies outside its usual range.

Table 3. Measurements in mm of five gulls *Larus* (from Dwight 1925)

	Sample size	Wing	Tail	Bill	Tarsus
Audouin's Gull <i>L. audouinii</i>	8	370-402	138-158	43-53	52-60
Herring Gull <i>L. argentatus argen-</i> <i>tus/argenteus</i>	18	375-447	152-189	45-58	55-70
Lesser Black-backed Gull <i>L. fuscus</i>	36	382-438	142-169	44-56	57-69
Great Black-backed Gull <i>L. marinus</i>	15	454-498	181-211	57-72	72-85
Great Black-headed Gull <i>L. ichthyaetus</i>	17	422-500	171-203	50-65	65-83

Audouin's Gull *Larus audouinii* (figs. 23E and 25, plates 26-37)

IDENTIFICATION

This rare Mediterranean speciality typically frequents wave-washed rocky coasts and islands, and—especially away from the breeding areas—flat, sandy shores. Adults (mainly in winter) and immatures—presumably from west Mediterranean breeding colonies—occur on the Atlantic coast of northwest Africa, especially Morocco (Smith 1972): it has been recorded in Portugal, and vagrants, especially immatures which are apparently less specialised in their feeding habits than adults (Garcia 1977), could occur farther north.

At all ages, differences of structure and behaviour are among the best distinctions from Herring Gull. Audouin's is only slightly smaller, but



Fig. 24. World distribution of Audouin's Gull *Larus audouinii*, showing breeding areas (black spots). The winter/non-breeding range extends out of the Mediterranean, mainly to the Atlantic coast of Morocco; the black line indicates the approximate southern limit. Vagrant north to Portugal

obviously slimmer and more elegant. It is a graceful flier, the slimmer wings and shorter, square-cut tail (usually held closely folded and straight) give a 'sail plane' appearance. It glides more, often for very long distances, on gently-arched wings, and performs agile swoops and turns. It is exclusively a marine feeder, picking from the surface with a lunge of its bill and long neck, or plunging more deeply into the sea from a low-level glide, often with a distinctive 'buck' of its tail as it enters the water. It is not an aggressive scavenger like other large gulls. It lacks Herring Gull's fierce expression, having a smaller, slimmer head with a sloping, elongated forehead giving a marked 'snout' effect and peaking well behind the eye. When alert, the neck is long and slender, and its stance more upright than Herring Gull. The bill is shorter and deeper, and is held 'drooping' downwards when perched.

Herring Gulls of the Mediterranean race *L. a. michahellis* (p. 134) are a potential source of confusion to observers new to the Mediterranean, because their plumage, especially of immatures, is markedly different from that of the north European subspecies. Once aware of this pitfall, however, there should be little difficulty in identifying Audouin's.

Juvenile Audouin's is described by Garcia (1977): compared with Herring Gull of the same age, it is generally darker, with smooth grey-brown head (without darker ear-patch) and underparts, and a suffused whitish 'face' and contrasting whitish crown. The mantle is darker, with neat, pale feather edgings, forming a more striking scaly pattern. The upperwing has two uniform dark bands across the secondaries and greater coverts, unlike Herring Gull, which has only a secondary bar; the inner primaries are only slightly paler than the blackish outer ones; thus, it lacks the prominent pale 'window', obvious from above and below on Herring Gull. The underwing has contrasting dark and light bars on the coverts; this area is paler and more uniform on Herring Gull. The tail and rump patterns are quite different from those of Herring Gull: apart from the white terminal fringe, the tail is wholly dark, contrasting with the mainly white undertail-coverts and the distinctively U-shaped white rump. The legs are dark grey, whereas Herring Gull's are pinkish.

Most of the juvenile differences are also found in first-winter and first-

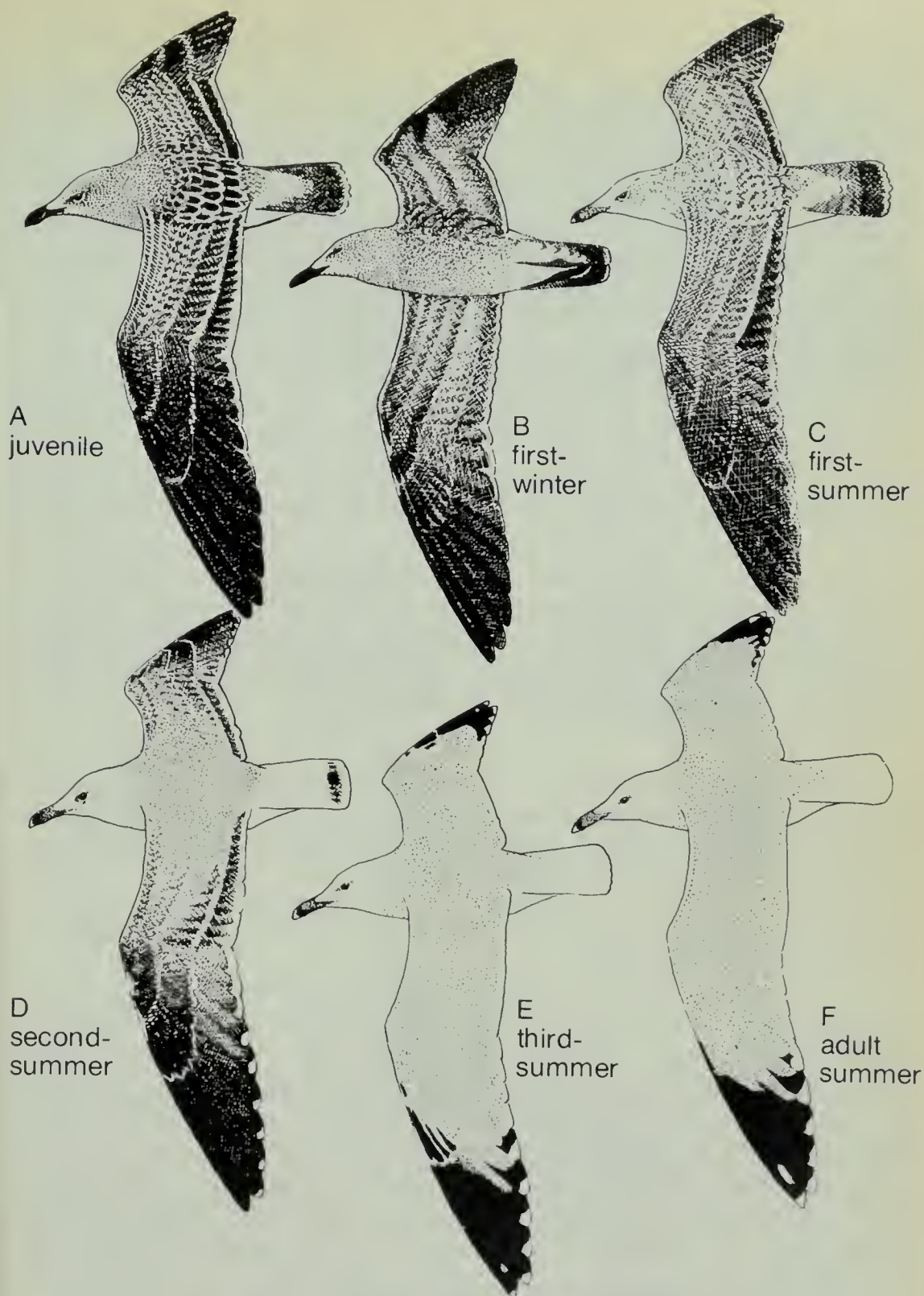


Fig. 25. Audouin's Gulls *Larus audouinii* in flight

summer plumages, although, after the autumn and spring partial moults, the head and body become generally whiter than on Herring Gull, and the wings and tail become much worn and faded by the first summer. First-year Lesser Black-backed Gulls have a similar upperwing pattern: at long range they are probably best distinguished by their darker head and body, rather uniformly dark underwing and more clearly banded tail.

Second-years differ from Herring Gulls of the same age by having a paler grey mantle (especially compared with the rather dark-backed Mediterranean race), neater, thinner tail band, more clear-cut white primary tips

(visible only when perched, but liable to disappear through wear), dark legs and usually reddish-based bill.

Third-years and adults, when seen well, bear no more than a passing resemblance to Herring Gulls. At long range, perhaps the best distinctions of Audouin's are the black-looking bill and legs, lack of prominent white mirrors in the black wing-tip, paler grey upperwing and mantle, lack of prominent white leading and trailing edges to the inner wing, and the different flight and feeding behaviour. At close range, the grey mantle colour extends onto the rump and as a diagnostic faint suffusion on the nape, flanks, belly and underwing. The black wing-tip has only one small mirror, often lacking on third-years, difficult to see except at close range from below. When perched, the white scapular- and tertial-crescents are very faint. The bill is deep red, with an ill-defined black subterminal band and yellowish tip: the latter is often invisible, accentuating the stubby shape.

In winter, third-year and adult Audouin's apparently have a white head, lacking the dark streaking acquired by most other large gulls in winter (thus, there is apparently little difference between summer and winter plumages). The Mediterranean race of Herring Gull, however, has a much whiter head in winter than those of northern Europe.

AGEING (see general discussion on ageing large gulls on pp. 113-115)

Juvenile: smooth grey-brown head and underparts, striking scaly pattern on mantle. Primaries, secondaries and tail mainly blackish. Bill mainly black (summer to October).

First-winter: as juvenile, except head and underparts probably less uniform, whiter (September to April).

First-summer: as first-winter, except head and underparts mainly white, wings and tail much worn and faded. Mantle less scaly, paler (March to October).

Second-winter: faint dusky head markings, mantle and inner wing-coverts mainly grey. Blackish outer primaries and coverts, secondary bar and tail band. Bill base usually dark red (August to April).

Second-summer: as second-winter, except head white, and wings and tail much worn and faded (March to October).

Third-winter: as adult, except much black on outer primary coverts, and sometimes trace of a tail band (August to April).

Third-summer: as third-winter, except primary tips reduced or lacking through wear (March to October).

Adult winter/fourth-winter: black on wing-tip confined to primaries (August to April).

Adult summer/fourth-summer: as adult winter, except white primary tips reduced or lacking through wear (March to October).

DETAILED DESCRIPTIONS

Juvenile (fig. 25A. From below and when perched, similar to first-winter, 25B and 23E).



26 & 27. Juvenile Audouin's Gull *Larus audouinii*, Greece, August 1976 (Richard Vaughan)

HEAD Smooth, uniform grey-brown (lacking darker ear-patch) and with whitish or creamy face, crown and nape: white-capped effect often prominent. Dusky eye-crescent and thin white crescents above and below eye. **BODY** Underparts smooth grey-brown, belly and undertail white, latter with dark chevrons at sides. Upper mantle and most of rump grey-brown, with subtle scaly effect, remainder of rump and uppertail-coverts forming distinctively U-shaped white area contrasting with dark tail. Remainder of mantle dark brown, with neat pale fringes,

forming prominent scaly pattern. **WINGS** Median and lesser coverts and tertials scaly as mantle: remainder of wing blackish, inner primaries only slightly paler than remainder, with black subterminal marks. Greater coverts and secondaries blackish, with fine white fringes. Underwing has dark and light bars across coverts. **TAIL** Mainly black, with white terminal fringe: base greyish, with little or no white. **BARE PARTS** Eye dark. Bill black, sometimes flesh-coloured at base. Legs dark grey.

First-winter (figs. 23E and 25B, wings and tail similar to juvenile, 25A). Acquired by post-juvenile head and body moult during autumn, probably complete by September to November.

Apparently as juvenile, except head and underparts probably whiter, less uniform; tip to bill.

First-summer (fig. 25C, underwing and tail similar to first-winter, 25B). Acquired by head and body moult, probably February to April.

As first-winter, except head and underparts mainly white, latter with dark streaks

28 & 29. First-summer Audouin's Gull *Larus audouinii*, Spain, April 1977 (Donald A. Smith)



and smudges; wings and tail becoming much worn and faded, especially median and lesser coverts, which become more uniform,

brownish; mantle paler, probably with much clear grey; bill paler, with blackish tip or subterminal band.

Second-winter (not illustrated, but similar to second-summer, fig. 25D). Acquired by complete moult, probably June to October.

HEAD White with dusky eye-crescent and faint streaking. **BODY** Underparts and rump white. Mantle uniform pale grey. **WINGS** Blackish secondary bar; remainder of inner wing mainly clear grey, with brown markings on coverts of variable extent. Inner primaries mainly clear grey, remainder of outer wing mainly blackish; all except outer one or two primaries with neat white tips in fresh plumage. Underwing mainly white, with a few dark markings on coverts. **TAIL** White, with neat black subterminal band. **BARE PARTS** As first-summer, except base of bill often reddish.



30. Second-winter Audouin's Gull *Larus audouinii*, Spain, September 1968 (F. G. H. Allen)

Second-summer (fig. 25D). Acquired by head and body moult, probably February to April.

As second-winter, except head white; dark areas on upperwing much faded, browner; more clear grey on inner wing-coverts; white

primary tips lacking through wear; base of bill usually dark red; orbital ring red.

Third-winter (not illustrated, but similar to third-summer, fig. 25E). Acquired by complete moult, probably June to October. Some may acquire adult plumage at this age, but probably the majority take an extra year.

As adult winter, except: **WINGS** Extensive black on outer primary coverts, sometimes extending onto alula, giving prominent 'headlights' effect on leading edge of outer

wing in flight. Mirror on outer primary tiny or lacking. **TAIL** Sometimes with faint dark subterminal marks.



31 & 32. Audouin's Gull *Larus audouinii* in flight, Spain, April 1978: the dark markings on the primary coverts may indicate third-year plumage (D. Smallshire)

Third-summer (fig. 25E). Acquired by head and body moult, probably February to April. As third-winter, except white primary tips reduced or lacking through wear.

Adult winter/fourth-winter (not illustrated, but similar to adult summer, fig. 25F). Acquired by complete moult, probably June to November.

HEAD White. Nape and sometimes crown with grey wash extending from mantle. **BODY** Underparts washed pale grey, but contrast with white head visible only in dull light at close range. Mantle smooth, pale pearly-grey

(similar in colour to mantle of Black-headed Gull *L. ridibundus*) extending onto rump, thus no clear division between mantle and rump. **WINGS** Grey, as mantle, even paler on outer wing because of diffuse whiter fringes to



33. Audouin's Gull *Larus audouinii*, probably third-summer, Spain, April 1977 (Donald A. Smith)

coverts and inner primaries. Thin, indistinct scapular- and tertial-crescents, invisible at long range. Inner wing with very thin white leading edge and diffuse, indistinct white trailing edge. Black confined to outer primaries, decreasing in extent inwards to small, isolated subterminal spots on 5th and 6th, forming clear-cut black wing-tip above and below; remainder of underwing pale grey, secondaries and inner primaries very translucent. Some individuals have small blackish marks on outer two or three primary

coverts, not as extensive as on third-years. Outer primaries prominently tipped white, usually visible only when perched. Small white mirror on inner web of outer primary, visible only at close range from below. TAIL White, often with grey wash at bases of central feathers. BARE PARTS Eye brown, orbital ring and gape red. Bill deep coral-red, looking black at ranges of 100 m or more, with single or double black subterminal band and yellowish tip, the latter often invisible at long range. Legs dull greyish or olive, soles yellow.

Adult summer/fourth-summer (fig. 25F). Acquired by head and body moult, probably February to May.

As adult winter, except white primary tips reduced or lacking through wear, and red at base of bill perhaps darker, more often appearing wholly blackish at long range.

34. Adult summer Audouin's Gull *Larus audouinii*, Spain, April 1978 (D. Smallshire)

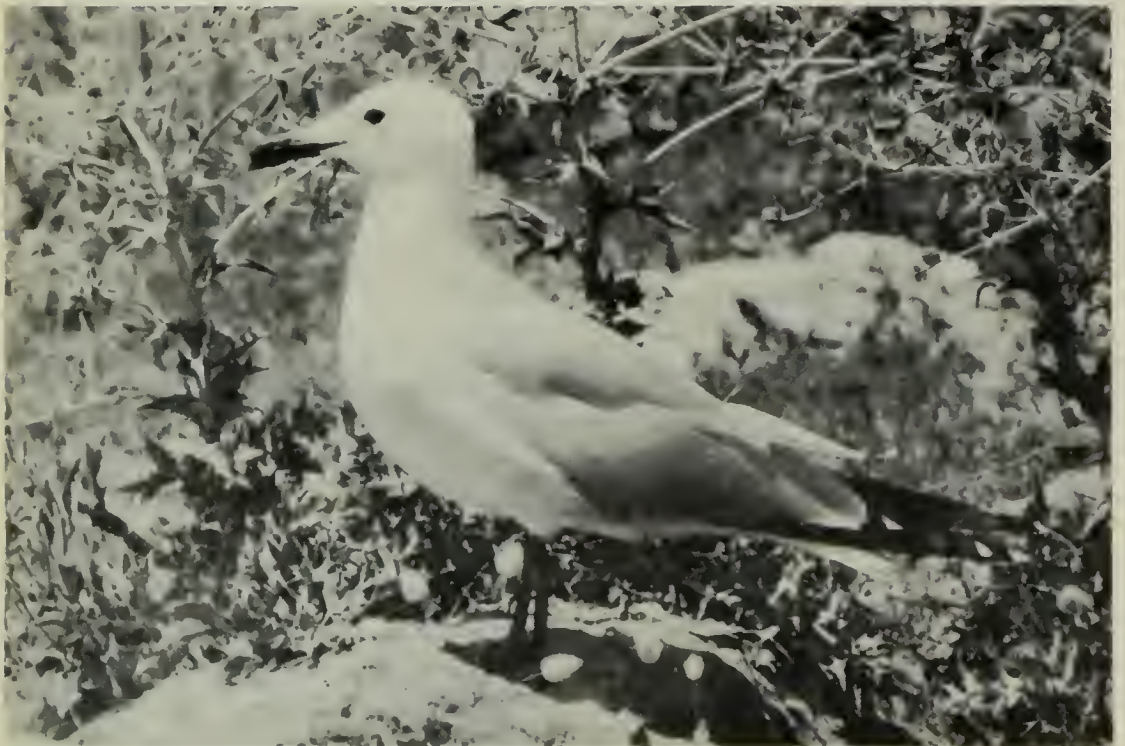




35. Adult summer Audouin's Gull *Larus audouinii*, Greece, August 1976 (Richard Vaughan)



36 & 37. Adult summer Audouin's Gull *Larus audouinii*, Greece, May 1966 (Ilse Makatsch)



Herring Gull *Larus argentatus* (figs. 23A and 27, plates 38-52). The identification summary, detailed descriptions and figs. 23A and 27 refer to the west European subspecies *L. a. argenteus*: the complex racial taxonomy of

Herring Gulls, and the distinctions of the other subspecies, are discussed under geographical variation on p. 131-135.



Fig. 26. World distribution of Herring Gull *Larus argentatus*, showing approximate breeding range (solid black) and approximate southern limit of winter/non-breeding range (thick black line). The thin line marks the division between the northern or nominate 'argentatus' group of subspecies and the southern 'cachinnans' group: the dotted lines mark the approximate breeding ranges of the subspecies. A *L. a. smithsonianus*; B *L. a. argenteus*; C *L. a. argentatus*; D *L. a. heuglini*; E *L. a. taimyrensis*; F *L. a. vegae*; G *L. a. atlantis*; H *L. a. michahellis*; I *L. a. cachinnans*; J *L. a. mongolicus*. The geographical variation of Herring Gulls is discussed on pages 131-135

IDENTIFICATION

Herring Gull is on average 20-30% smaller and proportionately less heavily built than Great Black-backed Gull. It is slightly larger than Lesser Black-backed Gull, but with heavier general build and proportionately shorter legs; the wings are proportionately broader and shorter, giving a heavier appearance in flight and a noticeably less attenuated rear-end when perched.

In juvenile, first-winter and first-summer plumages, Herring, Lesser Black-backed and Great Black-backed Gulls have a basically similar pattern and coloration. The appearance and specific differences of juveniles are described in table 4, and those of first-winter and first-summer plumages in the detailed descriptions. At these ages, some of the distinctions involve rather subtle comparisons of colour tones and patterns (which in themselves are subject to a good deal of individual variation), and they may not be apparent until after a good deal of careful study of mixed flocks containing two or all three species.

In second-year plumages, Herring Gull has a generally pale mantle and upperwing (usually with extensive clear grey at least on the mantle) reflecting the eventual adult coloration, and thus is readily separable from the black-backed pair, both of which are obviously dark-backed at these ages.

Third-years and adults are readily identifiable: Audouin's (p. 115) and Great Black-headed Gulls (p. 151) are the only other pale grey-backed large gulls with black on the primaries, and Glaucous and Iceland Gulls (part 5) have all-white wing-tips. The best distinctions at long range from the similar but much smaller Common Gull *L. canus* have already been described (72: 145-146).

AGEING (see general discussion on ageing large gulls on pp. 113-115)

Juvenile: whole plumage fresh and unworn. Head and underparts rather

Table 4. Detailed descriptions of juvenile Herring *L. argentatus*, Lesser Black-backed *L. fuscus* and Great Black-backed Gulls *L. marinus*

The specific differences are in *italics*: some of the distinctions involve rather subtle comparisons of colour tones and patterns (which in themselves are subject to a good deal of individual variation), and they may not be apparent until after a good deal of careful study of mixed flocks containing two or all three species

	Herring Gull (fig. 27A. When perched—except mantle—and from below, similar to first-winter, 23A and 27B)	Lesser Black-backed Gull (fig. 29A. When perched and from below, similar to first-winter, 23C and 29B)	Great Black-backed Gull (fig. 31A. When perched and from below, similar to first-winter, 23B and 31B)
Head and underparts	Streaked grey-brown with paler face and nape, dark ear-patch and blackish eye-crescent. <i>Generally paler than Lesser Black-backed</i>	Streaked dark grey-brown with paler face and nape, prominent dark ear-patch and blackish eye-crescent; blackish mottling on breast-sides and flanks, belly paler. <i>Generally darker than Herring with coarser markings</i>	Streaked grey-brown with prominent blackish eye-crescent, but <i>head and upper breast contrastingly whiter than rest of underparts</i> , which are generally more coarsely streaked than on Herring and Lesser Black-backed
Mantle	Feathers grey-brown, with pale edgings forming <i>slightly paler, less contrasting scaly pattern than Lesser Black-backed</i> and lacking strongly chequered pattern of Great Black-backed	<i>Darker than Herring, scaly pattern more contrasting</i>	Feathers blackish, with broad whitish edges, forming <i>contrasting chequered pattern</i> , less scaly than Herring and Lesser Black-backed, and generally paler than latter
Rump	Streaked grey-brown, general tone as mantle and base of tail, thus <i>contrast usually slight</i>	Generally whitish with darker streaking, <i>contrastingly paler than mantle</i>	Similar to Lesser Black-backed
Inner wing-coverts	General coloration as mantle, but pattern more barred, less scaly, including <i>outer greater coverts which lack the uniform dark bar of Lesser Black-backed</i>	General coloration as mantle, but pattern more barred, less scaly; <i>outer greater coverts mainly blackish-brown forming 'extra' dark bar on upperwing</i> , lacking on Herring and Great Black-backed	General coloration as mantle, but pattern more barred, less chequered; generally paler than Lesser Black-backed, <i>like Herring in tone and pattern, but more contrast</i>
Secondaries	Mainly blackish-brown, forming subterminal band on trailing edge of inner wing	As Herring	As Herring
Outer wing	Mainly blackish-brown, but inner primaries pale (with dark subterminal marks) forming <i>pale 'window', prominent from above and below</i>	Almost wholly blackish; inner primaries slightly paler than remainder and secondaries, thus <i>lacking prominent pale 'window'</i>	Pattern intermediate between Herring and Lesser Black-backed; <i>'window' effect in some lights</i> , not as prominent as on Herring
Underwing	<i>Prominent pale 'window', remainder rather uniform pale grey-brown</i>	'Window' effect very slight or lacking, generally dark, rather uniform blackish-brown	Slight 'window' effect; coverts rather uniform blackish-brown, remainder grey-brown giving <i>rather subtle two-tone effect</i>

Tail	Base whitish with darker bars, generally grey-brown as rump and mantle, thus broad, blackish-brown subterminal band less contrasting than on Lesser Black-backed, and lacking distinctive 'watered' pattern of Great Black-backed	Base typically rather whiter than on Herring, with thin black bars on outer feathers, <i>blackish subterminal band usually more contrasting</i> , solidly blackish and clear-cut	Base generally whiter than on Herring. <i>Blackish subterminal band typically diffuse and broken, forming distinctive 'watered' pattern</i>
Bare parts	Eye dark brown. Bill blackish with usually <i>prominent diffuse pale area at base</i> , mainly on lower mandible. Legs dull flesh	Eye dark brown. <i>Bill black without pale base.</i> Legs dull flesh	Eye dark brown. <i>Bill black with small whitish area at tip; large size emphasised by sharp contrast with whitish head.</i> Legs dull flesh

uniformly streaked grey-brown. Neat scaly pattern on mantle, uniformly barred wing-coverts. Bill blackish, with diffuse pale base (summer to October).

First-winter: as juvenile, except head and sometimes underparts generally whiter. Mantle pattern more irregular, less scaly (September to March).

First-summer: as first-winter, except head and underparts generally whitish, mantle paler, wings and tail becoming much worn and faded (March to September).

Second-winter: extensive dusky streaking on head, usually some clear grey on mantle. Outer primaries and secondary bar blackish, inner primaries and inner wing-coverts generally greyish, the latter with variable amount of brown. Extensive blackish tail band, not as extensive as first-year. Underwing mainly whitish. Bill extensively pale at base (September to March).

Second-summer: as second-winter, except head mainly white, mantle uniform pale grey or with a few brown feathers. Wings and tail becoming much worn and faded (March to September).

Third-winter: as adult winter, except much black on primary coverts and alula, black wing-tip less clear cut and lacking prominent mirrors, usually much brown freckling on inner wing, faint tail band, black subterminal band on bill (September to April).

Third-summer: as third-winter, except head white, wings and tail faded, and white primary tips reduced or lacking through wear (February to September).

Adult winter/fourth-winter: extensive dusky head markings, mantle and wings uniform pale grey, black wing-tip clear-cut and confined to outer primaries, two prominent mirrors, tail white, no black on bill (September to March).

Adult summer/fourth-summer: as adult winter, except head white, and white primary tips reduced or lacking through wear (February to September).

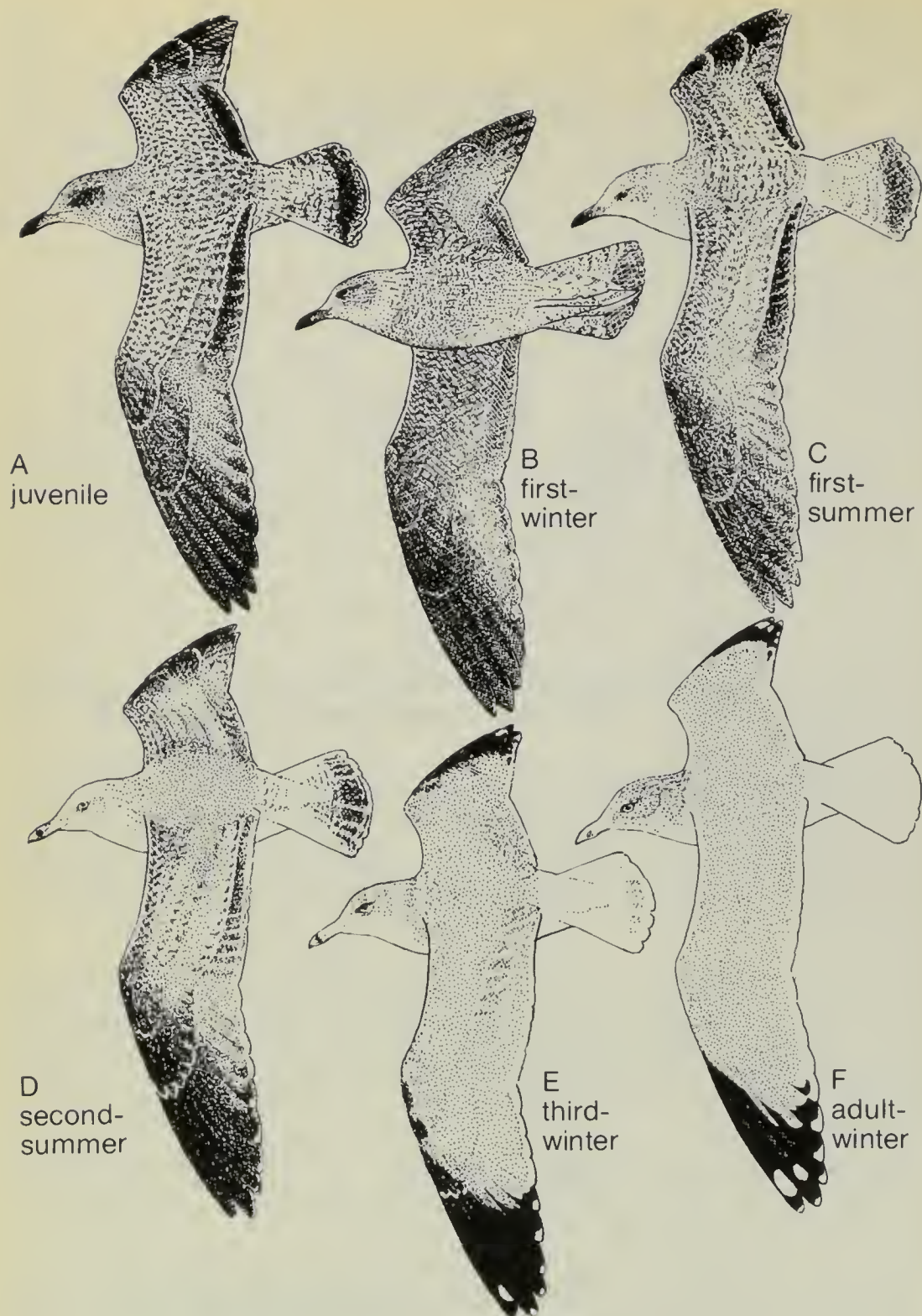


Fig. 27. Herring Gulls *Larus argentatus argentatus* in flight

DETAILED DESCRIPTIONS (These refer to the west European race *L. a. argentatus*: for difference of other races see pp. 131-135)

Juvenile

See table 4.

First-winter (figs. 23A and 27B, wings and tail similar to juvenile, 27A) Acquired by post-juvenile head and body moult, July to November.

Appearance and identification as for juvenile, except head (and sometimes under-parts) whiter, less uniform, and mantle less scaly with more complex pattern of dark bars. Generally paler than Lesser Black-backed, even more than in juvenile plumage.



38 & 39. Juvenile Herring
Gull *Larus argentatus*, High-
land, August 1975 (R. J.
Chandler)

40. Juvenile Herring Gull
Larus argentatus, Sweden,
August 1976 (Stellan Hed-
gren)





41 & 42. First-summer Herring Gulls *Larus argentatus*, North Yorkshire, May 1979 (start of moult to second-winter shown in flight) (R. J. Chandler)

First-summer (fig. 27C, underwing and tail similar to first-winter, 27B) Acquired by head and body moult, January to April.

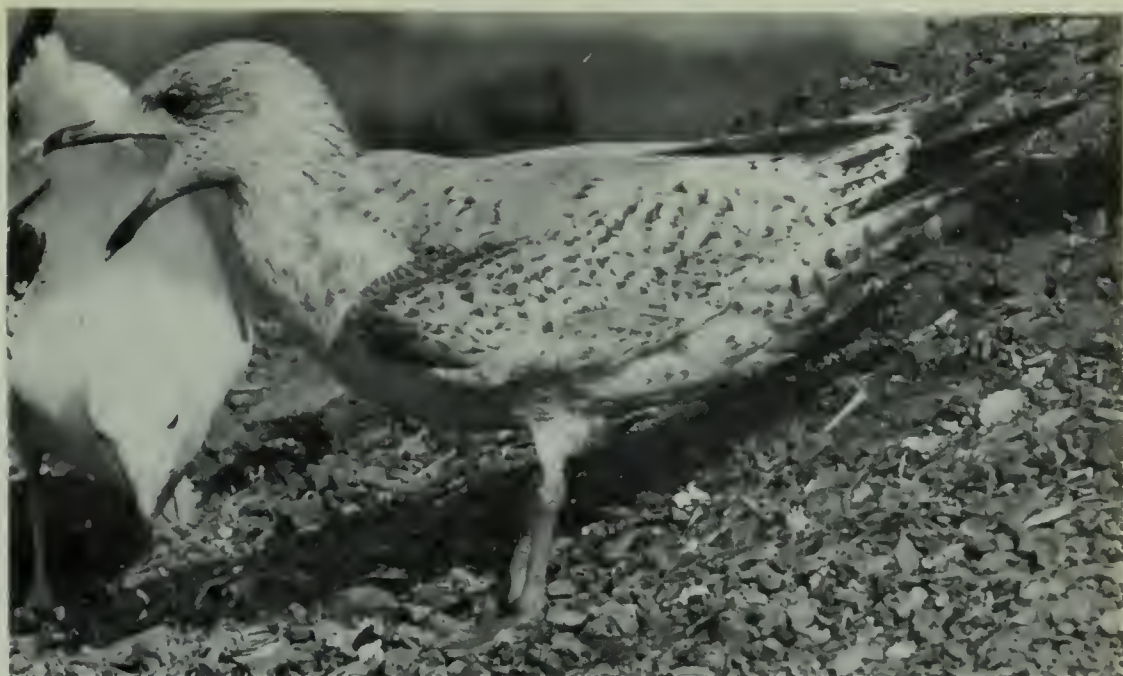
Appearance and identification as for juvenile, except head and underparts often extensively whitish. Dark areas on wings and tail often faded to pale brown, and pale areas faded to whitish, giving generally very pale

appearance by summer, strikingly paler than first-summer Lesser Black-backed. Bill often extensively pale at base. Eye sometimes slightly paler.

Second-winter (not illustrated, but wings and tail similar to second-summer, fig. 27D) Acquired by complete moult, May to October.

HEAD White with usually extensive dusky streaking. **BODY** Underparts and rump mainly white, with variable amount of dark

streaking. Mantle similar to first-winter, but usually with much clear grey. **WINGS** Outer wing mainly blackish, but inner four pri-



43. Second-winter Herring Gull *Larus argentatus*, North Humberside, March 1966 (Richard Vaughan)

44. Second-winter Herring Gull *Larus argentatus*, Gwynedd, April 1979 (R. J. Chandler)

maries and their coverts mainly clear grey, thus 'window' more clear-cut and contrasting than on first-years. Inner wing-coverts paler, often clear grey, more uniform than on first-years, with variable amount of brown mottling; prominent blackish-brown secondary bar. Underwing generally whiter than on first-years. TAIL Extensively whitish at base; extensive blackish subterminal band. BARE PARTS Eye often becoming pale. Bill usually extensively flesh or yellowish-flesh, with dark subterminal area and sometimes some reddish on gonys, but pattern highly variable. Legs dull flesh.



Second-summer (fig. 27D) Acquired by head and body moult, January to April.

As second-winter, except head and underparts often mainly white. Mantle usually clear grey, sometimes with a few brown-barred feathers. Dark areas on wings and tail faded, and pale areas faded to whitish (often



45. Second-summer Herring Gull *Larus argentatus*, Gwynedd, April 1978 (R. J. Chandler)

contrasting with grey mantle to give 'saddle' effect) by summer. Eye usually obviously pale at close range. Bill often developing

yellowish adult coloration, and sometimes reddish spot on gonys, but with subterminal dark area of variable extent.

Third-winter (fig. 27E) Acquired by complete moult June to October.

HEAD AND BODY White with extensive dusky streaking especially around eye and on crown and nape; fewer streaks on breast-sides and flanks. Mantle uniform pale grey. **WINGS** As adult winter, except black area on wing-tip larger, extending onto primary coverts and alula, white primary tips smaller, usually only one mirror (sometimes none), and extensive brown freckling especially on

inner greater coverts and tertials. Underwing as adult winter or with some brown marks on coverts. **TAIL** White with, usually, faint subterminal band of highly variable extent and pattern. **BARE PARTS** Eye pale yellow. Bill colours as adult, but usually generally paler and with dark subterminal mark. Legs bright or pale flesh.

Third-summer (not illustrated, but wings and tail similar to third-winter, fig. 27E) Acquired by head and body moult, January to April.

As third-winter, except head and underparts usually white, freckled brown areas on inner wings faded to whitish, white primary tips reduced or lacking through wear.

46. Third-summer type Herring Gull *Larus argentatus*, Isle of Man, May 1976 (*Pamela Harrison*)

47. Below, third-summer type (left) and adult summer Herring Gulls *Larus argentatus*, Isle of Man, May 1976 (*Pamela Harrison*)



Adult winter/fourth-winter (fig. 27F) Acquired by complete moult, June to November.

HEAD AND BODY As third-winter. **WINGS** Uniform pale grey, black confined to outer primaries, decreasing in extent inwards, usually to small subterminal spot on 6th, forming clear-cut black wing-tip above and below; some individuals also have small blackish marks on outer primary coverts. Outer primaries prominently tipped white, usually visible only when perched; mirrors on two outer primaries obvious at long range.

Scapular-crescent small or lacking; tertial-crescent prominent when perched. White leading edge to inner wing indistinct, but trailing edge prominent. Underwing white, with grey subterminal trailing edge and black wing-tip. **BARE PARTS** Eye pale yellow. Orbital ring yellow or orange. Bill deep or pale yellow, with orange or red spot on gonys and whitish tip; gape yellow or orange. Legs bright or pale flesh.

Adult summer/fourth-summer (not illustrated, but wings and tail similar to adult winter, fig. 27F) Acquired by head and body moult, January to April.

As adult winter, except head and body through wear, and bill and leg colours perhaps generally brighter.



48. Adult summer Herring Gull *Larus argentatus*, Gwynedd, April 1979. Restricted dark markings on primary coverts may be shown by individuals at any age, and are not necessarily a sign of immaturity (R. J. Chandler)



49. Adult winter Herring Gulls *Larus argentatus*, North Humberside, December 1970 (Richard Vaughan)

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION

The taxonomy of the Herring Gull is notoriously complex. The following summary follows the nomenclature of Vaurie (1965), except for the inclusion of *L. a. argenteus*, following Barth (1975) in a detailed and convincing review of the taxonomy of Herring Gulls in northwestern Europe. The subspecies fall into two fairly distinct groups: the northern or nominate 'argentatus' group (adults mainly pink-legged except *heuglini*), and the southern or 'cachinnans' group (adults mainly yellow-legged except *mongolicus*). Fig. 26 shows the approximate breeding range of each subspecies.



50. Adult summer Herring Gulls *Larus argentatus*, Isle of Man, May 1976 (Pamela Harrison)

51. Adult summer Herring Gull *Larus argentatus*, Co. Wexford, June 1974 (Richard T. Mills)



52. Adult summer Herring Gull *Larus argentatus* of Mediterranean race *michahellis*, Greece, May 1966 (Ilse Makatsch)



Northern or nominate '*argentatus*' group

L. a. smithsonianus: No west Palearctic records. Averages larger than *argentatus*/*argenteus*, wing 397-460 mm (Dwight 1925), first-years perhaps generally darker, with more uniform grey-brown underparts and almost wholly dark tail. Adult mantle very pale grey, similar to *argenteus*. Legs pink.

L. a. argenteus: Winters in breeding range and south to northern Iberia. Smaller than *argentatus*, slightly larger than Lesser Black-backed Gull. Adult mantle only slightly darker than Black-headed Gull *L. ridibundus*, with more black on wing-tip and smaller mirrors than *argentatus*. Head and bill rather small compared to *argentatus*. Legs pink.

L. a. argentatus: Winters in breeding range and south to northern Iberia. Averages larger than *argenteus*, some equalling small Great Black-backed Gull. Adults apparently complete the autumn wing moult later than *argenteus*, November to January. Adult mantle darker than *argenteus*, as dark or slightly darker than Common Gull, with less black on wing-tip and larger white mirrors and tips. Head heavier and more angular, and bill larger and duller (less yellow) in winter. Legs pink or greyish, but yellow-legged individuals (often larger and with darker grey mantles) occur with increasing frequency towards the northeast of breeding range ('*L. a. omissus*' of some authors).

L. a. heuglini: Migrates south to winter in area approximately from Black Sea, Aral Sea, northwest India and Gulf of Aden. Increasing numbers of Herring Gulls wintering in East Africa south to Dar-es-Salaam are thought to be mainly of this subspecies (P. L. Britton *in litt.*). Larger than *argentatus*, wing 410-458 mm (Dwight 1925), and mantle colour darker than other subspecies of Herring Gull, similar to palest *L. f. graellsii*. Legs yellow, but readily separated from *L. f. fuscus* in winter range by much larger size and heavier build, slate-grey not blackish mantle, and usually heavy streaking on nape (apparently lacking or faint in *L. f. fuscus*).

L. a. taimyrensis: Winter range not known: Vaurie (1965) suggested Caspian Sea, but this seems unlikely on geographical grounds. Some Herring Gulls wintering in Kenya, paler than *heuglini* with little head-streaking and pale (not pink) to yellow legs, may be this subspecies (P. L. Britton *in litt.*). Adult mantle intermediate between *heuglini* and *vegae* (thus obviously darker than *argentatus*). As large as *heuglini*, wing 410-453 mm (Dwight 1925), but legs pink or yellow.

L. a. vegae: No west Palearctic records. Winters eastern China to Japan. Adult mantle colour paler than *taimyrensis*, slightly darker than most *argentatus*. Legs pink or yellow.

Southern or '*cachinnans*' group

L. a. atlantis: Resident; may wander to west African coast. Smaller than *heuglini* and *taimyrensis*, probably similar to *argentatus*, wing 395-428 mm (Dwight 1925), but wings proportionately longer, giving sleeker, less bulky general appearance recalling Lesser Black-backed Gull. Adult mantle between *argentatus* and *L. f. graellsii*, and head often heavily streaked in winter giving hooded effect; legs always yellow; orbital ring red, and red bill spot more prominent

than on *argentatus*; first-years similar to *michahellis* in general rich brown coloration and defined tail band (J. van Impe *in litt.*).

L. a. michahellis: Resident within breeding range. Distinctly larger than *atlantis*, wing 435-464 mm (Vaurie 1925), but with similar sleeker, less bulky appearance than *argentatus*. Adult mantle colour paler than *atlantis*, but still obviously darker than *argenteus* and most *argentatus*; black on wing-tip extensive as on *argenteus*, with usually prominent mirrors on the outer two primaries (usually only one mirror on *atlantis*); apparently white-headed in winter; bare parts as *atlantis*. Brown areas on immatures generally darker than on *argenteus/argentatus*, with very distinctive rich gingery or rusty tone, fading to gingery-brown. Broad tail band on first-years, more defined than on *argenteus/argentatus*, contrasting with whiter base; bill remains wholly black throughout the first year (perhaps some pale at base by first-summer), lacking the pale base of *argenteus/argentatus*. In summer at least, first-years often have strikingly white head and underparts (unlike *argenteus/argentatus*) contrasting with darker mantle: this and the black bill give appearance recalling first-year Great Black-backed Gull. Immature *michahellis* looks quite different from *argenteus/argentatus*, and, because of this, observers new to the Mediterranean might mistake it for young Audouin's Gull which is, however, quite different.

L. a. cachinnans: Winters south to eastern Mediterranean, Persian Gulf and northwest India. About same size as *michahellis*, but on average slightly paler and with less black and more white on wing-tip. Apparently mainly white-headed in winter. Bare parts as *michahellis*.

L. a. mongolicus: No west Palearctic records. Winter range not known, but reported from north and northwest China. Apparently similar to *michahellis*, but legs pink or bluish.

There is a good deal of intergradation between subspecies, especially where the breeding ranges adjoin, and individual variation and hybridisation (the latter especially with Glaucous and Lesser Black-backed Gulls in northwestern Europe) are factors which should be borne in mind, as they may sometimes explain the puzzling appearance of a few individuals which apparently fit no known subspecies of Herring Gull. In a detailed field study of winter Herring Gulls in central England, Hume (1978) was able to make a distinction between small, pale *argenteus* (about 90% of the population) and larger, darker *argentatus* (about 10% of the population), although there was more or less intergradation between the two types. A few (about ten individuals) were puzzling: half had extensive white and very restricted black on the wing-tip, while the remainder were small, dark-mantled and white-headed, and had extensive black on the wing-tip and yellow legs. The possibility exists that these were hybrids, Herring $\times$ Glaucous in the case of the former, although the mantle colour would seem too dark (R. A. Hume *in litt.*), and Herring $\times$ Lesser Black-backed in the case of the latter, although the white head and the brightness of the yellow legs are characters apparently inconsistent with this view (Hume 1979).

Subspecific identification of Herring Gulls requires careful observation at fairly close range, with good light (preferably not full sunlight) from behind the observer (so that colour tones can be correctly judged), and careful assessment of all of the important characters: size, bare-part colour, extent of winter head-streaking, mantle colour, and wing-tip pattern. Obviously, it helps comparison if more than one subspecies is present.

The subspecific characters described above are largely based on museum skins, and their value in the field has in many cases not been tested. There is undoubtedly a lot more to be learned about the field characters of subspecies of Herring Gulls, and it is hoped that these summaries will encourage further attention by giving a broad base-line from which to work.

Analysis of ringing recoveries could throw more light on the incompletely known winter distributions of the various subspecies.

Several authors have recommended specific status for the southern 'cachinnans' group (thus Yellow-legged Gull *L. cachinnans*): this opinion is strengthened by the separate breeding behaviour of *michahellis* and *argenteus* in the same colony on Ile d'Oléron in the Bay of Biscay in 1976 (Nicolau-Guillaumet 1977). After range expansions south (*argenteus*) and north (*michahellis*) in recent years, this is the first meeting (at least in the west Palearctic) of the northern and southern subspecific groups of Herring Gulls.

Lesser Black-backed Gull *Larus fuscus* (figs. 23C and 29, plates 53-66).



Fig. 28. World distribution of Lesser Black-backed Gull *Larus fuscus*, showing approximate breeding range (solid black) and approximate southern limit of winter/non-breeding range (black line)

The identification summary, detailed descriptions and figs. 23C and 29 refer to the west European race *L. f. graellsii*. Geographical variation is discussed on pages 142-143.

IDENTIFICATION

Lesser Black-backed Gull is slightly smaller than the west European race of Herring Gull *L. a. argenteus*, but with lighter general build and proportionately longer legs: the wings are proportionately longer, giving a slimmer-winged appearance in flight and a noticeably more attenuated rear end when perched. It is on average 20-30% smaller than Great Black-backed Gull, with proportionately much slimmer bill and smaller head, and proportionately longer wings and legs: it is generally much less bulky, and more attenuated at the rear end when perched. The size difference is very obvious when the two species are together.

The appearance of juveniles, and the differences from the similar juveniles of Herring and Great Black-backed Gulls, are described in table 4 (pp. 124-125), and those of first-winter and first-summer plumages in the detailed descriptions.

In second-winter and second-summer plumages, it is much darker on the mantle and wings than Herring Gull, reflecting the eventual adult coloration, so there is little risk of confusion. At these ages, it is best told from Great Black-backed by the generally darker and more extensive head

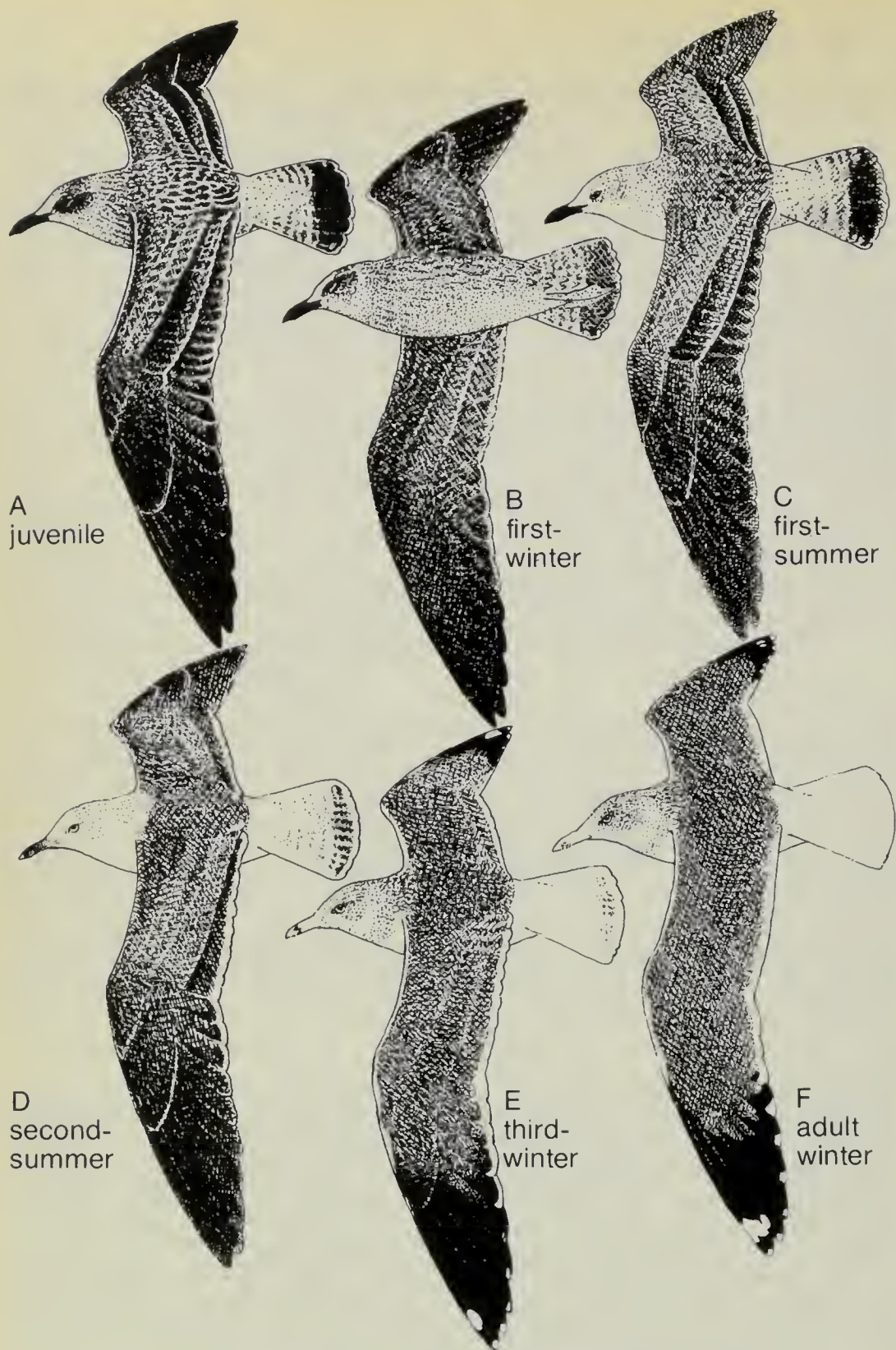


Fig. 29. Lesser Black-backed Gulls *Larus fuscus graellsii* in flight

markings, especially in winter when Great Black-backed is rather white-headed; generally darker underwing; and in summer by the dark ash-grey rather than blackish mantle (*L. f. graellsii* only). The size and structural differences, however, are perhaps the most reliable features at these ages.

Third-years and adults have often extensive dark grey streaking or clouding on the head in winter (Great Black-backed remains generally white-headed in winter); dark ash-grey rather than blackish mantle (*L. f.*

graellsii only), contrasting with the black wing-tips; thinner tertial-crescent and smaller white tips to the primaries in fresh plumage, visible when perched (larger and prominent on Great Black-backed); only one small white mirror, sometimes two (much more white on the wing-tip on Great Black-backed); and yellowish or bright yellow legs (always flesh or creamy-flesh on Great Black-backed).

AGEING (see general discussion on ageing large gulls on pp. 113-115)

Juvenile: whole plumage fresh and unworn. Head and underparts rather uniformly streaked dark grey-brown. Neat scaly pattern on mantle, uniformly barred wing-coverts. Bill black (summer to October).

First-winter: as juvenile, except dark ear-patch and scaly pattern on mantle less well-defined (August to March).

First-summer: as first-winter, except head and underparts generally whiter; mantle and upperwing more uniform and browner through fading, especially on inner wing-coverts (March to September).

Second-winter: extensive dusky head markings, variable amount of dark ash-grey on mantle, and inner wing-coverts brownish, not neatly barred as first-winter. Outer wing and secondary bar blackish, tail whiter than first-year with smaller subterminal band. Bill often extensively pale at base (September to March).

Second-summer: as second-winter, except head mainly white, mantle uniform dark ash-grey, wings and tail becoming much worn and faded, and bill often yellowish at base (March to September).

Third-winter: as adult winter, except black wing-tip less clear cut and usually lacking mirror, much brown freckling on inner wing, faint tail band, black subterminal band on bill (September to April).

Third-summer: as third-winter, except head white, wings faded to patchy brown and grey (not uniform as adult summer), and white primary tips reduced or lacking through wear (February to September).

Adult winter/fourth-winter: extensive dusky head markings, uniform dark ash-grey mantle and wings, clear-cut black wing-tip with one or two mirrors, white tips to primaries obvious when perched, tail white, no black on bill (August to March).

Adult summer/fourth-summer: as adult winter, except head white, and white primary tips reduced or lacking through wear (February to September).

DETAILED DESCRIPTIONS

Juvenile

See table 4 (pp. 124-125).

First-winter (figs. 23C and 29B, wings and tail similar to juvenile, 29A) Acquired by post-juvenile head and body moult, summer to November.

Appearance and identification as for juvenile, except ear-patch sometimes less prominent and scaly pattern on mantle less well-defined. Upperparts generally darker and more uniform than first-winter Herring and Great Black-backed. Head and underparts often becoming whiter.



53. Juvenile and adult summer Lesser Black-backed Gulls *Larus fuscus* of British race *graellsii*, Dyfed, August 1977
(Richard Vaughan)



54 & 55. Juvenile Lesser Black-backed Gull *Larus fuscus*, Kent, August 1976
(Pamela Harrison)



56 & 57. Juvenile Lesser Black-backed Gull *Larus fuscus* (presumably *L. f. fuscus* on range), Sweden, September 1976
(Stellan Hedgren)



First-summer (fig. 29C, underwing and tail similar to first-winter, 29B) Acquired by head and body moult, January to April.

Appearance and identification as for juvenile, except head and underparts generally whiter, wings and tail worn and faded, coverts (especially median and inner greater coverts) worn and often faded to pale brown, and mantle less scaly, giving much more

uniform brownish appearance than juvenile and first-winter, but retaining much darker general coloration than first-summer Herring and Great Black-backed. Bill usually acquires pale base. Legs sometimes yellowish-flesh.



58 & 59. Above, second-winter (centre), adult summer (left) and third-summer type Lesser Black-backed Gulls *Larus fuscus*, presumably *L. f. intermedius* on mantle colour; right, second-winter Lesser Black-backed Gull (presumably *L. f. graellsii* on paleness of grey mantle feathers) near end of moult from first-summer plumage, Kent, August 1976 (*Pamela Harrison*)



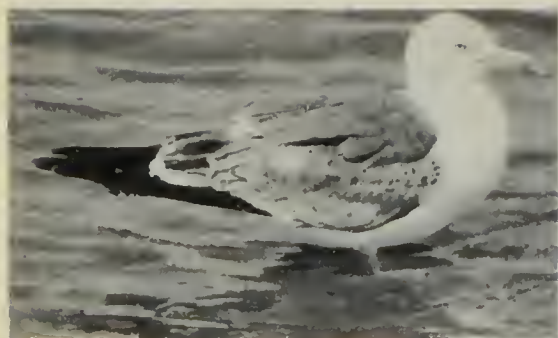
Second-winter (not illustrated, but wings and tail similar to second-summer, fig. 29D) Acquired by complete moult, May to October.

HEAD White with extensive dusky streaking, usually concentrated around eye and on crown and nape. **BODY** Underparts white, with extensive dark streaking and blackish mottling on breast-sides and flanks. Rump mainly white. Mantle usually with much dark grey developing. **WINGS** Outer wing and secondaries blackish. Inner wing-coverts

mainly brown, with diffuse paler fringes. Underwing generally dark. **TAIL** Mainly white, with prominent blackish subterminal band, less broad than on first-years. **BARE PARTS** Eye sometimes becoming pale. Bill usually extensively pale with blackish sub-terminal area, but pattern highly variable. Legs flesh or yellowish-flesh.

Second-summer (fig. 29D) Acquired by head and body moult, January to April.

As second-winter, except head and underparts generally whiter. Mantle usually clear



dark ash-grey, sometimes with a few brown-barred feathers. Blackish areas on wings and tail faded browner, and brown areas often faded to pale brown, especially on median coverts. Eye usually obviously pale. Bill often yellowish, with subterminal dark area of variable extent.

60. Lesser Black-backed Gull *Larus fuscus* of British race *graellsii*, probably second-summer, Kent, August 1976 (Pamela Harrison)

Third-winter (fig. 29E) Acquired by complete moult, June to October.

HEAD White, with extensive dusky streaking or clouding, usually concentrated around eye and on crown and nape. **BODY** Underparts mainly white, with variable amount of dark streaking. Rump white. Mantle uniform dark ash-grey. **WINGS** As adult winter, except black on outer wing less clear-cut and more extensive, white primary tips usually smaller or lacking, and only one mirror, often none;

extensive brown freckling on inner wing, especially on inner greater coverts and tertials, wing thus lacking general smart, uniform appearance of adult. **TAIL** White, with usually faint subterminal band of varying extent and pattern. **BARE PARTS** Usually as adult, except bill with usually small dark subterminal mark.

Third-summer (not illustrated, but wings and tail similar to third-winter, fig. 29E) Acquired by head and body moult, January to April.

As third-winter, except head and underparts usually white, upperwing faded, patchy brown, especially on median and greater

coverts and tertials; white primary tips reduced or lacking through wear.

Adult winter/fourth-winter (fig. 29F) Acquired by complete moult, June to October.



61. Adult winter Lesser Black-backed Gull *Larus fuscus* of British race *graellsii*, North Yorkshire, September 1970 (Richard Vaughan)

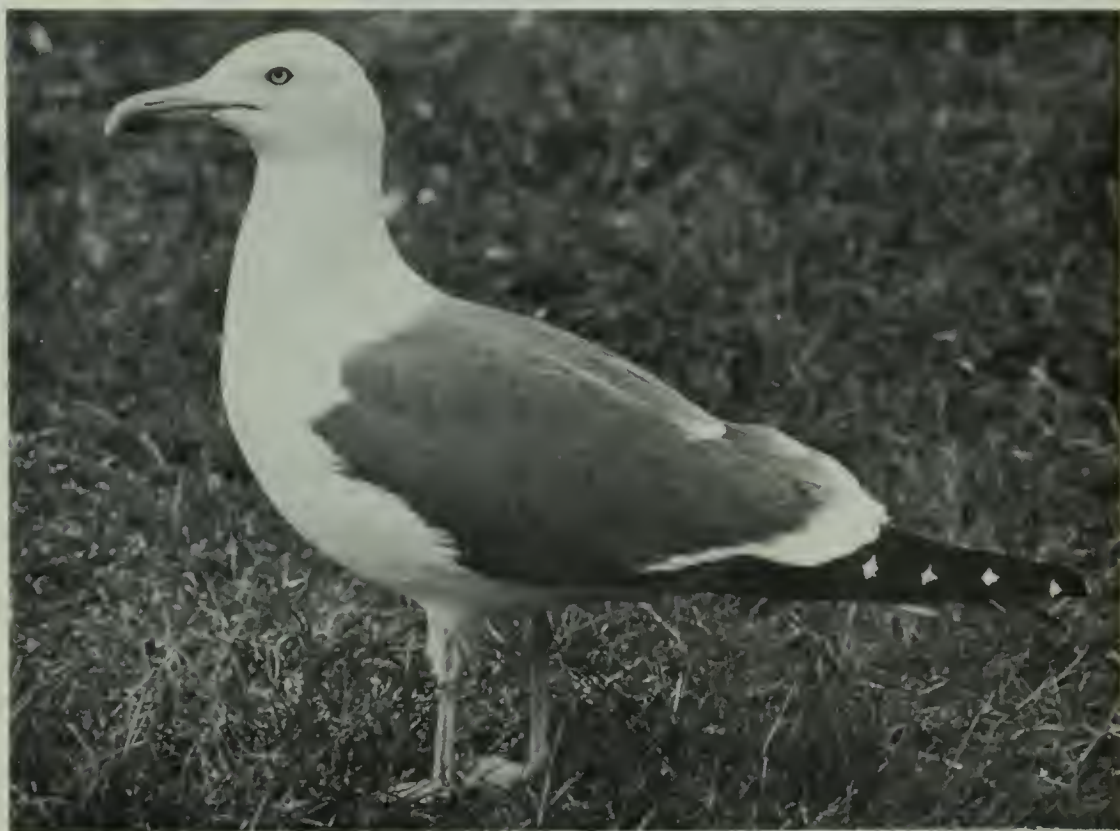
HEAD AND BODY As third-winter. **WINGS** Uniform dark ash-grey; scapular-crescent small, sometimes lacking; tertial-crescent prominent, obvious when perched, but on average less extensive and thinner than on Great Black-backed. Thin white leading edge to inner wing, white tips to secondaries and inner primaries, forming prominent trailing edge. Black on outer primaries decreasing in extent inwards, usually to small subterminal spot on 7th, forming clear-cut black wing-tip. Outer primaries with

neat white tips, smaller than on Great Black-backed, visible only when perched. Mirror on outer primary and sometimes another (much smaller) on 2nd. Underwing white, with broad, dark grey subterminal trailing edge, merging with blackish undersides of outer primaries. **TAIL** White. **BARE PARTS** Eye pale yellow. Orbital ring red. Bill deep yellow, with reddish spot on gonys and whitish tip; colours generally deeper than on Great Black-backed. Legs deep or creamy-yellow.

Adult summer/fourth summer (not illustrated, but wings and tail similar to adult winter, fig. 29F) Acquired by head and body moult, January to May.

As adult winter, except head and body white, grey of mantle and wings acquiring brownish tone through fading, white primary

tips reduced or lacking through wear, and bare parts perhaps generally brighter.



62 & 63. Adult summer Lesser Black-backed Gulls *Larus fuscus* of British race *graellsii*: above, Cumbria, May 1970 (Richard Vaughan); right, Gwynedd, April 1978 (R. J. Chandler)





64. Adult summer Lesser Black-backed Gull *Larus fuscus* of south Scandinavian race *intermedius*, Norway, June 1976 (H. B. Skjelstad)



65 & 66. Adult summer Lesser Black-backed Gulls *Larus fuscus* of Scandinavian race *fuscus*, Sweden: left, June 1975 (Jan Elmelid); right, July 1974 (Fredrik Erhardt)

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION

Barth (1975), in a detailed and convincing review of the taxonomy of Lesser Black-backed Gull, recognised three subspecies, distinguishable in the field mainly by the mantle and wing colour of adults.

L. f. fuscus: Baltic and northern Norway. Migrates mainly southeastwards, and is apparently the only subspecies wintering in the Middle East and east Africa. Identification and ageing as *graellsii*, except mantle and wings of adult as black or blacker than Great Black-backed Gull, showing hardly any contrast with black wing-tip, often with brownish cast, probably through fading. Photographs and field observations from east Africa indicate that this subspecies remains white-headed in winter (P. L. Britton and N. van Swelm *in litt.*), unlike adult *intermedius* and *graellsii*, which acquire usually prominent dusky head-streaking. Adults begin the complete autumn moult about the beginning of August, some two months later than *intermedius* and *graellsii*.

L. f. intermedius: Southern Norway, west Sweden and Denmark. Migration and winter range as *graellsii*. Identification and ageing as *graellsii*, except mantle and wings of adult blackish, slightly paler than Great Black-backed Gull, contrasting with black wing-tip. Often shows brownish cast probably through fading. Timing of autumn moult of adults as for *graellsii*.

L. f. graellsii: Iceland, Faeroes, British Isles, Netherlands and Brittany. Migrates mainly south or southwestwards to wintering areas in western Europe and west Africa. Identification, ageing and timing of moult are covered in the detailed descriptions. Mantle and wings of adult

dull smoky grey or dark ash-grey, obviously darker than Herring Gull *L. a. argentatus* and lacking the blackish tones of both *fuscus* and *intermedius*, and showing obvious contrast with the black wing-tip.

There is a good deal of intergradation in mantle colour in some breeding colonies in Scandinavia (between *fuscus* and *intermedius*) and western Europe (between *intermedius* and *graellsii*), and in west European and west African wintering populations, nowhere more obvious than in Britain, where a proportion of individuals apparently match *fuscus* in their blackness. While typical examples of the three subspecies are readily distinguishable in the field (especially the distinctively pale-backed *graellsii*), fairly close-range observation, with good light (preferably not full sunlight) from behind the observer, is usually necessary for a correct assessment of colour tones. My own observations of wintering and migrant Lesser Black-backed Gulls in southeast England suggest that the vast majority of blackish-backed Scandinavian birds are within the range of *intermedius*: a minority show the blackness of typical *fuscus* as described by Barth (1975) or shown by colour photographs of *fuscus* wintering in east Africa.

On geographical grounds, it seems possible that *fuscus* from breeding areas in northern Norway are more likely to migrate southwestwards (rather than southeastwards as in the case of the Baltic population of *fuscus*), and this may be the area of origin of the *fuscus*-type Lesser Black-backed occurring in Britain. An analysis of ringing recoveries would throw light on this possibility.

Great Black-backed Gull *Larus marinus* (figs. 23B and 31, plates 67-82)



Fig. 30. World distribution of Great Black-backed Gull *Larus marinus*, showing approximate breeding range (solid black) and approximate southern limit of winter/non-breeding range

IDENTIFICATION

Great Black-backed Gull is markedly larger than Herring and Lesser Black-backed Gulls. Compared with the latter, it has a proportionately stouter bill and larger head, and proportionately shorter wings and legs; it is generally much more bulky, and less attenuated at the rear end when perched. The size difference is obvious when the two species are together. In flight, it has broader and proportionately shorter wings, giving a heavier, more lumbering appearance.

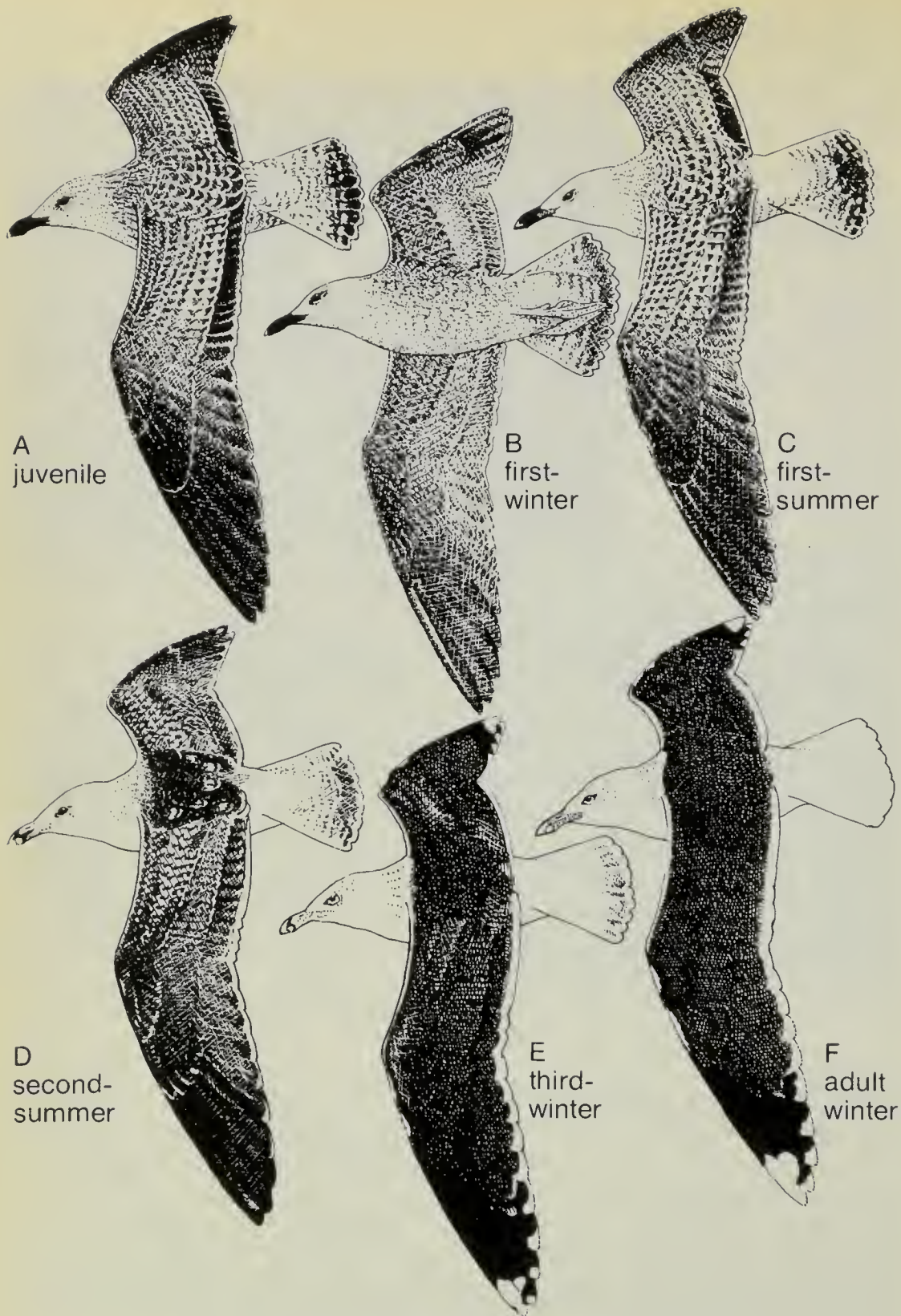


Fig. 31. Great Black-backed Gulls *Larus marinus* in flight

The appearance of juveniles, and the differences from the similar juveniles of Herring and Lesser Black-backed Gulls, are described in table 4 (pp. 124-125), and those of first-winter and first-summer plumages in the detailed descriptions.

The main differences between Great Black-backed and Lesser Black-backed in second-year and subsequent plumages are summarised under Lesser Black-backed on pp. 135-136.

AGEING (see general discussion on ageing large gulls on pp. 113-115)

Juvenile: whole plumage fresh and unworn. Underparts uniformly streaked grey-brown, head generally whiter. Neat, coarsely chequered pattern on mantle and all inner wing-coverts. Bill mainly black (summer to October).

First-winter: as juvenile, except head and body generally whiter, and mantle pattern less neatly chequered (August to March).

First-summer: as first-winter, except head and underparts whiter, mantle more uniformly dark, but no clear blackish as on second-years (March to September).

Second-winter: mantle more uniform, with variable amount of clear dark grey or blackish. Inner wing-coverts generally more uniform grey-brown. No clear-cut black and white on wing-tip. Extensive blackish on tail. Base of bill extensively pale (September to March).

Second-summer: as second-winter, except head and body mainly white, mantle mainly uniform blackish. Bill often acquires some adult coloration (March to September).

Third-winter: as adult winter, except black on wing-tip less clear-cut and white less extensive; usually much brown freckling on inner wing. Faint tail band. Black subterminal mark or band on bill (September to April).

Third-summer: as third-winter, except wings faded patchy brown and black, and white primary tips reduced or lacking through wear (February to September).

Adult winter/fourth-winter: slight dusky head-streaking, uniform blackish mantle and wings, extensive white on wing-tip, tail white, no black on bill (September to March).

Adult summer/fourth-summer: as adult winter, except head white, and white primary tips reduced or lacking through wear (February to September).

DETAILED DESCRIPTIONS

Juvenile

See table 4 (pp. 124-125).

67. Juvenile (right) and adult summer Great Black-backed Gulls *Larus marinus*, Gwynedd, August 1976 (R. J. Chandler)



First-winter (figs. 23B and 31B, wings and tail similar to juvenile and first-summer, 31A and C) Acquired by post-juvenile head and body moult, summer to November.

Appearance and identification as for juvenile, except white-headed effect often more marked (although some dark streaking visible at close range, especially around eye and on nape). Mantle pattern less regular,

less neatly chequered, but retaining general light and dark contrast. Bill becoming paler at base, but not prominently pale-based as on Herring Gull.



68. First-winter Great Black-backed Gull *Larus marinus*, North Humberside, January 1971 (Richard Vaughan)



69. First-winter Great Black-backed Gull *Larus marinus*, Cornwall, October 1967 (Kalevi K. Malmström)



70. First-winter Great Black-backed Gull *Larus marinus* (left) with third-winter type (right) and two first-winter Herring Gulls *L. argentatus*, Kent, October 1976 (Pamela Harrison)

First-summer (fig. 31C, underwing and tail similar to first-winter, 31B) Acquired by head and body moult, January to April.

Appearance and identification as for juvenile, except head and underparts generally whiter, mantle more uniformly dark with less contrasting chequered pattern, and bill often prominently tipped whitish and base pale.



71 & 72. Left, first-summer Great Black-backed Gull *Larus marinus*, North Yorkshire, May 1979 (R. J. Chandler)



73. Above, first-summer Great Black-backed Gull *Larus marinus*, commencing moult to second-winter, Isle of Man, May 1976 (Pamela Harrison)



74. First-summer (left) and second-summer Great Black-backed Gulls *Larus marinus*, North Yorkshire, May 1979 (R. J. Chandler)



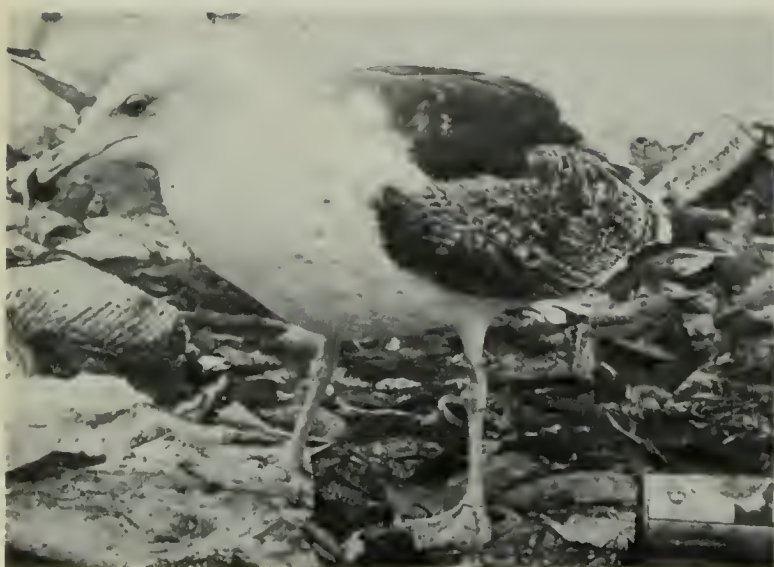
Second-winter (not illustrated, but similar to second-summer, fig. 31D) Acquired by complete moult, May to October.

HEAD White, with faint dark streaking around eye and on nape. **BODY** Underparts with extensive coarse dark streaking especially on breast-sides and flanks. Rump mainly white. Mantle usually with much clear dark grey or blackish, feathers otherwise whitish with brown bars. **WINGS** Outer wing mainly blackish-brown, inner primaries slightly paler with blackish subterminal marks. Lesser and median coverts mainly rather uniform brownish; greater coverts

rather uniform grey-brown: inner wing thus lacking strongly chequered or barred appearance of first-years. Secondary bar blackish. Underwing mainly dark, but coverts white, with dark markings. Outer primary sometimes with trace of mirror. **TAIL** Whitish, with extensive blackish subterminal band. **BARE PARTS** Eye sometimes becoming pale. Bill usually pale at base with extensive dark subterminal areas, but pattern highly variable. Legs as juvenile.



75. Second-winter Great Black-backed Gull *Larus marinus*, near end of moult from first-summer (the outer primaries have yet to be replaced), Northumberland, September 1970
(Richard Vaughan)



76. Second-winter Great Black-backed Gull *Larus marinus*, near end of moult to second-summer, Lincolnshire, February 1969
(Richard Vaughan)

Second-summer (fig. 31D) Acquired by head and body moult, January to April.

As second-winter, except head and underparts often white with few dark streaks. Mantle mainly clear blackish, often with a few brown-barred feathers. Wings and tail

worn and faded, inner wing-coverts acquiring general brownish appearance. Eye pale. Bill yellowish with subterminal dark area of variable extent.



77. Second-summer Great Black-backed Gull *Larus marinus* with adult summer Herring Gull *Larus argentatus*, Isle of Man, May 1976 (Pamela Harrison)

Third-winter (fig. 31E) Acquired by complete moult, June to November.

HEAD White, with dark eye-crescent and a few dark streaks mainly around eye and on nape: looks white-headed at long range. **BODY** Underparts and rump white. Mantle uniform blackish-grey. **WINGS** As adult winter, except black more extensive and white primary tips and mirror on 2nd smaller; extensive brown freckling on inner wing, especially on inner greater coverts and

tertiaries, thus wings lacking smart, uniform appearance of adult. **TAIL** White, with usually faint subterminal band of variable extent and pattern. **BARE PARTS** Bill usually whitish or fleshy-yellow, often with some reddish on gonys, with prominent, neat black subterminal band, but pattern highly variable.

Third-summer (not illustrated, but similar to third-winter, fig. 31E) Acquired by head and body moult, January to April.

As third-winter, except head and underparts white, patchy appearance of upperwing more pronounced, mantle and wings acquir-

ing brownish tone due to fading, and white primary tips reduced through wear.

78 & 79. Third-summer type Great Black-backed Gull *Larus marinus*, North Yorkshire, May 1979 (R. J. Chandler)





80. Third-summer type Great Black-backed Gull *Larus marinus*, Humberside, February 1969
(Richard Vaughan)

Adult winter/fourth-winter (fig. 31F) Acquired by complete moult, June to January. In view of this species' larger size, it seems likely that a higher proportion do not acquire full adult plumage at this age, showing signs of immaturity especially on inner wing-coverts, tail and bill.

HEAD AND BODY As third-winter. **WINGS** Uniform blackish-grey, looking black at long range; scapular-crescent small, and extensive tertial-crescent obvious when perched. Thin white leading edge; white tips to secondaries and inner primaries forming prominent trailing edge. Black on outer primaries decreasing in extent inwards, usually to subterminal mark on 6th, forming black wing-tip which, at close range, contrasts with the blackish-grey remainder. Outer primaries with large white tips, on 1st

merging with large mirror to form extensive white end to feather: this, and the large mirror on 2nd form diagnostic wing-tip pattern. Underwing white, with broad, dark grey subterminal trailing edge which merges with blackish undersides of outer primaries. **TAIL** White. **BARE PARTS** Eye pale yellow. Orbital ring red. Bill pale yellow or fleshy-yellow, with orange or red spot on gonys; colours generally paler than Lesser Black-backed. Legs flesh or creamy-flesh.

Adult summer/fourth-summer (not illustrated, but similar to adult winter, fig. 31F) Acquired by head and body moult, January to May.

As adult winter, except head and body white, blackish-grey of mantle and wings acquiring brownish tone through fading,

white primary tips reduced through wear, and bare parts perhaps generally brighter.

81. Adult Great Black-backed Gull *Larus marinus* in moult from summer to winter plumage, Norfolk, August 1977 (R. J. Chandler)





82. Adult summer Great Black-backed Gulls *Larus marinus* with first-summer Herring Gull *L. argentatus*, Isle of Man, May 1976 (Pamela Harrison)

Great Black-headed Gull *Larus ichthyaetus* (figs. 23D and 33, plates 83-96).



Fig. 32. World distribution of Great Black-headed Gull *Larus ichthyaetus*, showing approximate breeding range (solid black) and approximate southern limit of winter/non-breeding range. A vagrant to western Europe, with five records in Britain prior to 1958 and only two since

IDENTIFICATION

Great Black-headed Gull is usually obviously larger than Herring Gull. When perched, it often matches Great Black-backed in length, but its build is not as heavy, the wings are proportionately longer and extend farther beyond the tail (giving a more attenuated rear end), and the legs are proportionately longer; the tertials are typically held loosely folded, projecting as a prominent 'hump' from the line of the lower back. The head shape is distinctive: the long, sloping forehead, which peaks well behind the eye, gives a heavy 'snout' effect, which accentuates the length and heaviness of the bill. In flight, the deep chest, long head and heavy bill may give a front-heavy impression; it is proportionately longer-winged than other large gulls. These structural features are important at all ages.

Great Black-headed Gulls, especially immatures, could easily be overlooked when perched among other large gulls, but in flight have a very distinctive appearance at all ages.

Juveniles have extensive brown on the head and mantle—the latter prominently scaled—and, unlike any other immature large gull, prominent

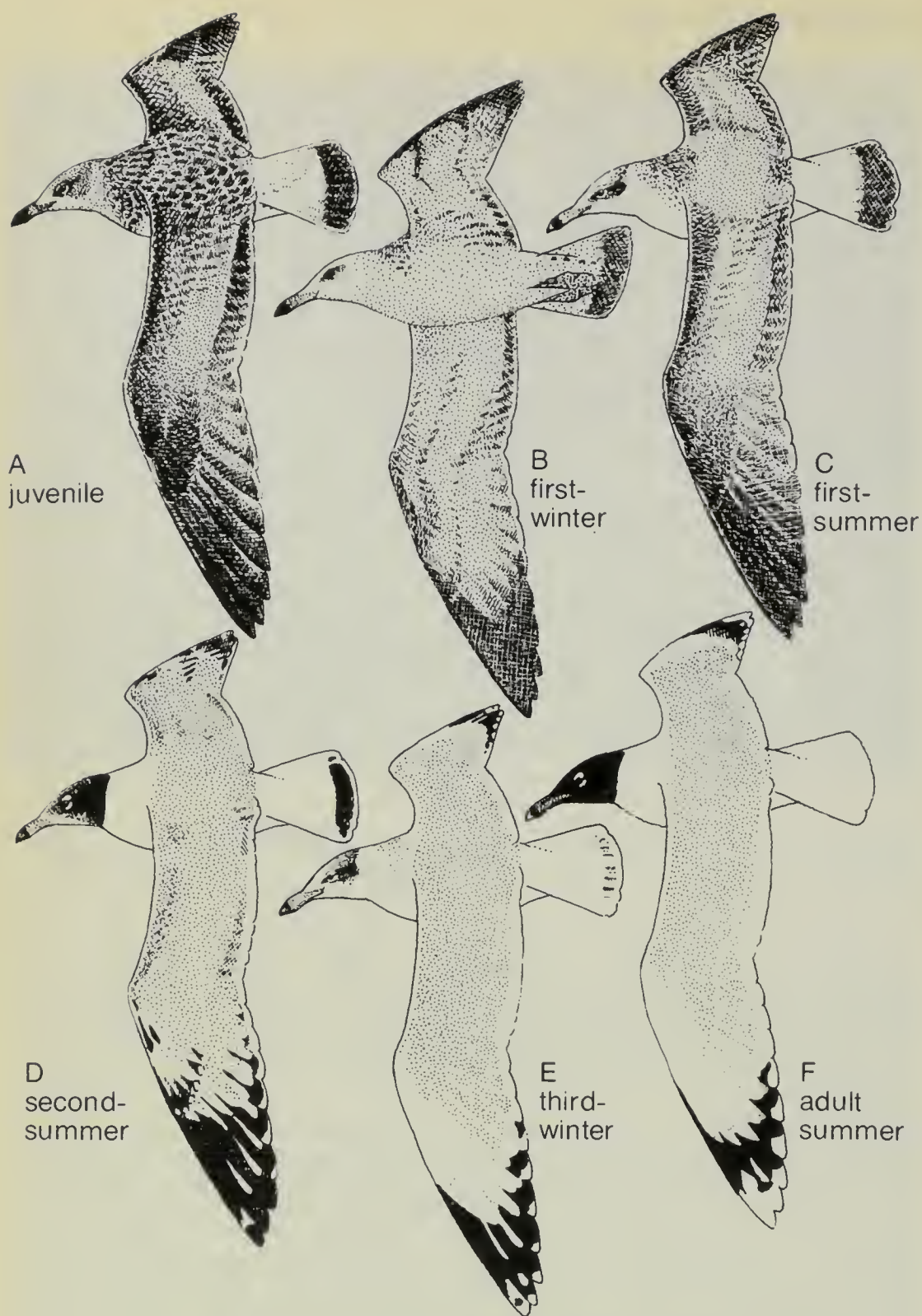


Fig. 33. Great Black-headed Gulls *Larus ichthyaetus* in flight

brownish breast-side patches or complete pectoral band contrasting sharply with the white remainder of the underparts. Surprisingly in view of its large size, Great Black-headed normally acquires a mainly clear grey mantle and white underparts in the first winter, a pattern more like that of some medium-sized gulls of the same age, and quite unlike the extensively dark mantle and body of other first-winter large gulls. The head is white, with dark markings behind the eye, usually forming a prominent dark patch, and dark streaking concentrated on the lower nape, often extending

to dark breast-side patches. The outer greater coverts are mainly grey-brown, forming a uniform mid-wing panel between the blackish outer primaries, secondary bar and brown carpal area. The underwing is mainly white, and the tail is white, with a broad, clear-cut black subterminal band: patterns unlike any other first-year large gull. In first-summer plumage, a partial or full hood is sometimes acquired. Throughout the first year, the bill is pale, with clear-cut black tip or subterminal band.

In second-year plumages, the outer primaries and their coverts are mainly blackish, but the inner primaries and inner wing are mainly clear grey, usually with a few brown coverts and an indistinct secondary bar. The subterminal tail band is thinner than on first-years, and the bare parts usually begin to acquire some adult coloration. A partial or full hood is usually acquired in second-summer plumage.

Third-years closely resemble adults, but have more extensive black on the primaries and less white on the tips, and usually a faint tail band.

Adults are unmistakable: Great Black-headed is the only large gull with a black hood in summer, reduced to a dark mask behind the eye in winter. The wing pattern is diagnostic: the inner wing is pale pearly-grey, with a broad white trailing edge, and the outer wing is mainly white, with a neat subterminal crescent of black across the outer primaries. The bill is mainly yellow, with a prominent black subterminal band and reddish tip. The legs are greenish-yellow.

Large gulls with patches of oil on the head, or abnormal concentrations of the usual dark head-streaking in winter, may at times suggest this species, but examination at least of the wing and tail patterns will avoid the slight misidentification risk in such cases.

AGEING

Juvenile: extensive brownish on head and breast, clear-cut brownish pectoral band, scaly brown mantle (summer to October).

First-winter: winter head pattern, white underparts with brownish breast-side patches, mainly uniform pale grey mantle. Blackish-brown outer primaries, secondary bar and broad tail band. Brownish wing-coverts, and grey-brown mid-wing panel on outer greater coverts (August to April).

First-summer: as first-winter, except hood of variable extent, wings and tail faded, and brownish carpal area reduced (February to September).

Second-winter: winter head pattern, mantle and wings mainly clear pale grey, outer primaries and coverts mainly black, clear-cut, thin black tail band (July to April).

Second-summer: as second-winter, except with partial or full hood (February to September).

Third-winter: as adult winter, except outer primaries with more black and less white at tips. Usually a faint tail band (July to April).

Third-summer: as third winter, but hood fully developed (January to September).

Adult winter/fourth-winter: winter head pattern, outer wing mainly white with subterminal crescent of black across outer primaries and extensive white at tips. Tail white (August to February).

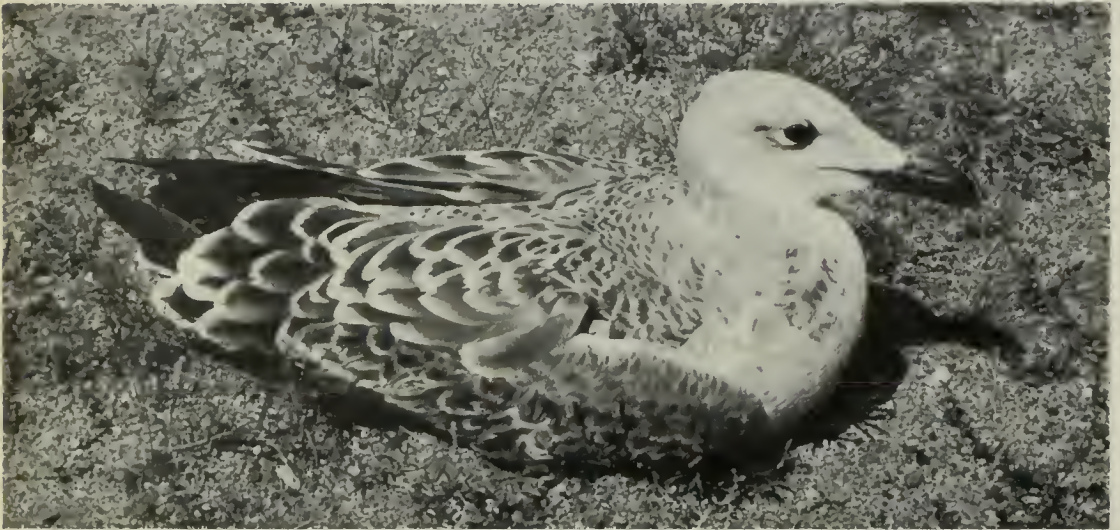
Adult summer/fourth-summer: as adult winter, full black hood (January to September).

DETAILED DESCRIPTIONS

Juvenile (fig. 33A, underwing and tail similar to first winter, 33B).

HEAD White, with variable amount of brown streaking behind eye, contrasting with darker nape and breast-sides. Thin white crescents above and below eye; eye crescent dusky. **BODY** Underparts white, with brownish mottling on breast-sides, often joining in centre to form fairly clear-cut pectoral band, sometimes extending onto flanks. Undertail-coverts and rump mainly white, usually with a few dark spots at sides. Mantle rich brown, with pale feather fringes forming strong scaly pattern. **WINGS** Carpal area brown, with pale feather fringes. Outer greater coverts uniform greyish or brownish-grey, with dark centres; inner greater coverts and tertials brown, with clear-cut pale fringes. Second-

aries blackish, with white fringes, and white on inner webs increasing in extent inwards. Outer wing mainly blackish-brown, inner three or four primaries sometimes with broad, clear-cut pale margins: white on inner webs of primaries increasing in extent inwards from 2nd or 3rd. Underwing-coverts white, with sparse dark markings in lines. **TAIL** White, with broad, clear-cut blackish subterminal band, width about one-third of tail length, slightly narrower on outer feathers; outer web of outer feather wholly white. **BARE PARTS** Eye dark. Orbital ring dark grey. Bill greyish or flesh basally, with extensive diffuse black tip. Legs lead grey, brownish-grey or flesh.



83. Juvenile Great Black-headed Gull *Larus ichthyaeetus*, Mongolia, August 1979 (Alan Kitson)

First-winter (figs. 23D and 33B, wing and tail pattern similar to first-summer, 33C) Acquired by post-juvenile head and body moult, summer to September.

As juvenile, except: **HEAD AND BODY** White, with dusky markings around eye often faint or almost lacking, but typically forming a defined patch from behind eye, extending diffusely over crown. Prominent white crescent above and below eye. Nape streaked or neatly spotted with blackish-brown, concentrated in a dense patch on lower nape (contrasting sharply with grey mantle), often extending onto breast-sides to form prominent shoulder patches. Mantle usually clear pale grey, with a few brown feathers



84. First-winter Great Black-headed Gull *Larus ichthyaeetus* with first-winter and adult Sooty Gulls *L. hemprichii*, Kenya, February 1974 (P. L. Britton)

especially on lower back, but sometimes mainly brown. **WINGS** Dark areas becoming faded and browner, especially inner pri-

maries and their coverts. **BARE PARTS** Base of bill paler, sometimes yellowish, with clear-cut black tip or broad subterminal band.

First-summer (fig. 33C, underwing and tail similar to first-winter, 33B) Acquired by head and body moult, January to April.

As first-winter, except: **HEAD** Black usually more extensive; a few may acquire partial or full hood and lose the dark nape patch. **WINGS** AND **TAIL** Becoming much worn and faded,

mid-wing panel often whitish. **BARE PARTS** As first-winter, or bill yellowish with clear-cut subterminal band, and legs with greenish tone.

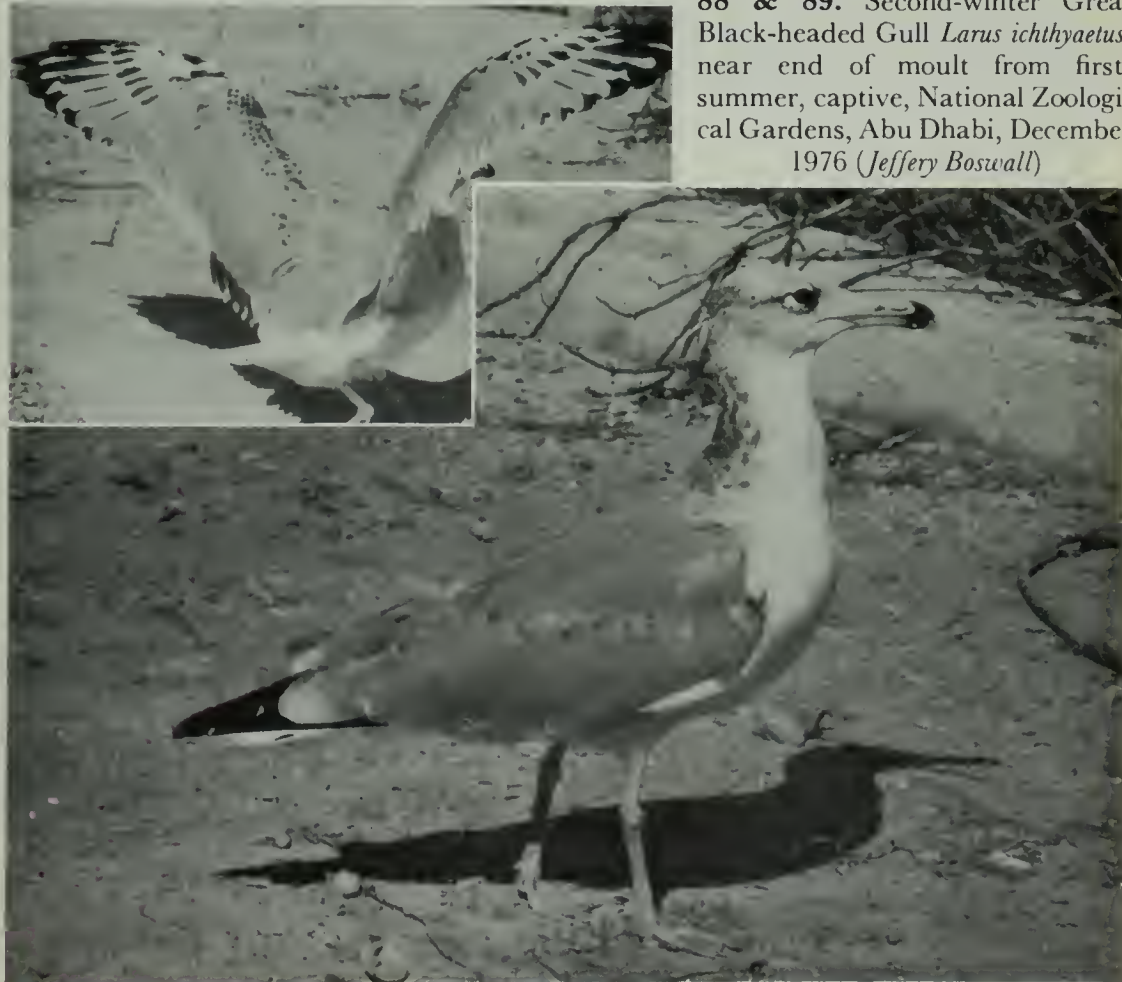


85-87. First-summer Great Black-headed Gull *Larus ichthyaetus*, Mongolia, May 1977 (Alan Kitson)

Second-winter (not illustrated, but wing and tail pattern similar to second-summer, fig. 33D) Acquired by complete moult, May to October.

Head white, with dusky markings forming well-defined patch from behind eye, often extending diffusely over crown. Nape streaked

88 & 89. Second-winter Great Black-headed Gull *Larus ichthyaetus*, near end of moult from first-summer, captive, National Zoological Gardens, Abu Dhabi, December 1976 (Jeffery Boswall)



or spotted blackish, concentrated in patch on lower nape. **BODY** Underparts and rump white. Mantle uniform pale grey, perhaps darker and browner in tone than adult. Small white scapular- and prominent tertial-crescent. Inner wing with faint secondary bar and usually a few brown coverts; outer primaries and their coverts with extensive blackish, decreasing in extent inwards to

small subterminal marks on 7th to 9th: outer wing thus with much black along leading edge. Underwing white, except for black on outer primaries and a few dusky marks on coverts. **TAIL** White with prominent subterminal black band, thinner than first-year. **BARE PARTS** Bill yellowish with clear-cut black subterminal band and pale tip. Legs dusky, greenish or yellowish.

Second-summer (fig. 33D) Acquired by head and body moult, January to April.

As second-winter, except partial or full hood usually acquired, white primary tips and terminal tail fringe reduced or lacking through wear, bill sometimes more orange-yellow, and legs usually yellowish.



90. Second-summer Great Black-headed Gull *Larus ichthyaetus*, USSR, April 1974 (V. A. Zubakin)

Third-winter (fig. 33E) Acquired by complete moult, May to October. Some probably become indistinguishable from adults at this age.

As adult winter, except: **WINGS** Black on outer primaries more extensive and less white at tips; wing-tip looks wholly black at

long range. **TAIL** Faint or spotted tail band usually present.

Third-summer (not illustrated, but wings and tail as third-winter, fig. 33E) Acquired by head and body moult, January to April.

As third-winter, except full hood usually acquired, and white primary tips reduced or lacking through wear.



91 & 92. Third-summer Great Black-headed Gull *Larus ichthyaetus*, Mongolia, May 1977 (Alan Kitson)

Adult winter/fourth-winter (not illustrated, but wings and tail similar to adult summer, fig. 33F) Acquired by complete moult, July to November.

HEAD AND BODY As second-winter, except mantle pale pearly-grey, with thin whitish fringes to most scapulars, giving delicate scaly pattern; thin scapular- and prominent tertial-crescent. **WINGS** Inner wing and inner primaries pale pearly-grey, with thin white leading edge and broad white trailing edge. Outer primary with complete black outer web, extensive subterminal black and large white tip; subterminal black decreasing

inwards usually to a small spot on 6th, but precise pattern of black and white highly variable. Remainder of outer wing white, forming a prominent triangle of white along the leading edge; often the whole of the outer wing looks white, apart from the subterminal crescent of black across the outer primaries. Underwing white, with dusky rear edge to inner wing-coverts. **TAIL** White. **BARE PARTS** As second-winter.

Adult summer/fourth-summer (fig. 33F) Acquired by head and body moult, January to April.

As adult winter, except: **HEAD** White, with extensive black hood, extending farther down neck at front than at rear when perched. Thick white crescents or oval patches posteriorly above and below eye. **WINGS** White primary tips reduced through

wear. **BARE PARTS** Eye dark brown. Orbital ring red. Bill yellow or orange-yellow, with neat black subterminal band and reddish or orange-red tip. Gape dull red. Legs yellow or greenish-yellow.



93. Adult summer Great Black-headed Gulls *Larus ichthyaetus*, USSR, May 1974 (V. A. Zubakin)



94 & 95. Adult summer Great Black-headed Gull *Larus ichthyaetus*, USSR, May 1974 (V. A. Zubakin)



96. Adult summer Great Black-headed Gull *Larus ichthyaetus* with young, USSR, May 1974
(V. A. Zubakin)

(To be continued)

P. J. GRANT

14 Heathfield Road, Ashford, Kent TN24 8QD

It is intended to publish this series of papers as a book. Any suggested amendments to the text, illustrations or maps, or new photographs, will be welcomed by the author.

Mystery photographs

39 The comments on the value of a photographic portrait showing typical jizz made in the first paragraph in this feature last month (*Brit. Birds* 73:102) are equally applicable this month: Richard T. Mills's Yellow-browed Warbler *Phylloscopus inornatus*, photographed in Co. Cork in October 1977 (plate 24, repeated here at reduced size) is another classic portrait. The dumpy shape, recalling Goldcrest *Regulus regulus*; prominent, dark-bordered, long supercilium; faint, diffuse, pale crown stripe; striking, rectangular lower wing-bar (tips of greater coverts) and much smaller upper wing-bar (tips of median coverts), both emphasised by being dark-bordered; prominent pale edges to the tertials and fine pale fringes to remiges and rectrices; pale legs; and dark-tipped lower mandible are all clearly shown, even more obviously than they are depicted in most field guides. Although it is a still photograph, the vivacity of Yellow-browed Warbler is nevertheless suggested; this species is almost constantly on the move, which may explain why there are few photographs



of the quality of the one shown here. Once its character is appreciated, Yellow-browed is easy to identify. JTRS



97. Mystery photograph 40. Identify the species. Answer next month

Notes



Flying speed of Sparrowhawk On 16th April 1978, while driving near Llanboidy, Dyfed, I followed an adult male Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus* flying along the road. It maintained a speed of 64 kph, and gave the impression of flying rather casually. After I had followed it for over ½ km, it flew over a hedge. Mavrogordato (1973, *A Hawk for the Bush*) estimated that *Accipiters* are capable of 64kph, and quoted Frances Pitt (1922, *Woodland Creatures*) as having recorded a Sparrowhawk flying at 56 kph in circumstances in which the hawk might still have had some reserve of speed.

CARL G. JONES

The Hawk Trust, PO Box No. 1, Hungerford, Berkshire RG170QE

Pike attacking adult Moorhen On 21st January 1978, at Rye Meads Sewage Works, Hertfordshire, Roger Emmens and I were attempting to capture Moorhens *Gallinula chloropus* by hand for ringing. As we drew level to an adult Moorhen, it dived. Light conditions enabled me to see it clearly as it swam downstream. After about 5 m, a pike *Esox lucius* about 50 cm long shot out from beneath the overhanging vegetation and grabbed the Moorhen at the base of the neck. This sudden movement stirred up the bottom debris and obscured my view, but the pike must have released the Moorhen almost immediately, as the latter appeared from the mud-cloud still swimming downstream. It surfaced after 4 m and I captured it, while the pike swam lazily upstream. A cursory examination showed no injuries to the Moorhen, which, when released, showed no disability.

ALAN J. HARRIS

Westbrook, Peldon Road, Great Parndon, Harlow, Essex CM19 4HT

Fifty years ago . . .

'THE "BRITISH BIRDS" MARKING SCHEME. Progress for 1929. By H. F. Witherby. In 1929, the twenty-first year of our Ringing Scheme, we have achieved another record in numbers and have reached a total of over a quarter of a million birds ringed since the inauguration of the Scheme in 1909 . . . ' (*Brit. Birds* 23: 258, March 1930)

Announcements

Sir Landsborough Thomson's autobiography The typescript, entitled 'The romance and science of birds', has now been deposited by his literary executors in the library of the Scottish Ornithologists' Club, 21 Regent Terrace, Edinburgh EH7 5BT, where it may be consulted by appointment. Besides giving a detailed account of the long and distinguished career of one of the founding fathers of modern ornithology, the text is an invaluable source of information on the development of ornithology and conservation over the first three-quarters of the 20th century.

Young Ornithologists of the Year, 1979

This annual Young Ornithologists' Club competition was again sponsored by *British Birds*. The winners were presented with their prizes (£100-worth of books and free subscriptions to *British Birds*) by Dr J. T. R. Sharrock at the RSPB headquarters at The Lodge, Sandy, Bedfordshire, on 19th December 1979 (plate 98).

The junior prizewinner was Paul Chapman, who had studied the birds of the Cathedral Close in Carlisle. His detailed diary was very impressive: his use of precise counts and times, rather than words such as 'several' and 'occasionally', revealed an unusually scientific attitude for someone aged 8.

98. YOUNG ORNITHOLOGISTS OF THE YEAR, 1979. Bertram Bree, Jane Cutler and Paul Chapman, with Peter Holden, national organiser of the YOC, and JTRS, December 1979 (*RSPB*)



The diary of the intermediate prizewinner, Jane Cutler (12), documented not only her discoveries when birdwatching at the Welsh Harp in London, but also some of her mistakes, which she subsequently rectified. Thus, it showed the process of her learning; the standard of her entries also improved with time, reflecting her increasing competence and knowledge.

The wildlife of the coast of Jersey was studied by the senior prizewinner, Bertram Bree (16). His account was enlivened by sketches, which he used to depict—in many cases in great detail—the behaviour of birds which he had observed.

British Birds is delighted to be able to help to foster the development of young ornithologists by this co-operation with the YOC. The journal will again sponsor this competition in 1980. Details will appear in the magazine *Bird Life*, which is sent free to all members of the YOC. For details of membership, write to Peter Holden, The Lodge, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 2DL.

Request

Skylarks in winter 1978/79 A huge movement of Skylarks *Alauda arvensis* occurred in a few days some 15 months ago, during late December 1978 and early January 1979. It was seen in many places from Edinburgh to Southampton and was perhaps the most impressive hard-weather movement for many years. So that a summary can be prepared (for publication if this is warranted), details of relevant observations of Skylarks and any associated species during that period are requested by R. E. Youngman, 53 Seymour Park Road, Marlow, Buckinghamshire SL7 3ER.

News and comment

Peter Conder and Mike Everett

'Nature Conservation in the Marine Environment' The need for marine nature reserves to complement terrestrial and freshwater reserves in the maintenance of wildlife habitats, and to conserve marine flora and fauna, is described in a recently published report, *Nature Conservation in the Marine Environment*, by a joint working party of marine experts convened by the Natural Environment Research Council and the Nature Conservancy Council to appraise the growing threats to the marine environment and make recommendations for its conservation.

The single most damaging impact on the coast is the reclamation of mud- and sand-flats, and of coastal wetlands. This is now an international problem. Other threats include some modern fishing practices, the selective collection of marine species by scuba divers, educational classes and bait diggers in

certain localities, the construction of coastal and offshore structures for oil and gas exploitation, mineral extraction, industrial and domestic wastes, invasive alien seaweeds and recreational facilities.

The NCC has asked the Government to make provisions for marine nature reserves in the forthcoming Wildlife and Countryside Bill. Other recommendations in the report indicate that the NCC should have a greater involvement in marine wildlife conservation; develop a formal marine conservation policy; seek to extend its powers, at present limited to the area above low water mark; and seek additional resources to enable it to develop an effective strategy for marine conservation.

Nature Conservation in the Marine Environment may be obtained, price £2.50 including postage (UK only), from the NCC, Interpretative Branch, Attingham Park, Shrewsbury, Salop SY4 4TW. (*Habitat*)

Oil disaster warning A warning that Britain's chances of suffering 'catastrophic' environmental damage from oil pollution are greater than at any time, is given by the RSPB in a major report to the Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution, calling for urgent action to be taken to protect our seabirds.

The report says: 'there is real danger of massive bird mortality on a scale not yet seen in western Europe'. Chief among the RSPB's recommendations are calls for an extension of the present three-mile limit at sea to 12 miles, enlarging the UK's area of jurisdiction over foreign vessels; joint action by EEC coastal states against oil pollution, off west Europe in particular; better policing of the seas so that 'pirate' ships discharging oil can be detected and fined heavily; prevention of pollution from routine discharge of oil, including fuel oil, from all classes of ship (a major cause of bird deaths); a halt on further oil exploration and production in inshore sea areas of outstanding wildlife importance until oil pollution prevention and clean-up methods provide adequate safeguards.

The RSPB says that, in the past nine years, at least 46,000 oiled birds have been picked up dead, 35,000 of them from 88 separate major incidents. Many others will have died at sea, but their bodies never found. The figures also reveal a recent increase in the number of birds killed. Sixteen pollution incidents involving nearly 12,000 birds occurred between October 1978 and June 1979, the worst period since the winter of 1969/70. Of these, nine separate incidents killed at least 7,000 birds off the coasts of north Scotland, Orkney and Shetland, an area seldom affected in the past, but one where there are huge numbers of seabirds. The full report, *Marine Oil Pollution and Birds*, is obtainable, price £2.50, post free, from the Conservation Planning Department, RSPB, The Lodge, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 2DL.

Seabirds in the North Sea The Nature Conservancy Council, funded jointly by the Departments of Energy, Environment and Trade, and by the United Kingdom Offshore Operators' Association, has begun a three-year investigation into the numbers, distribution and behaviour of seabirds in the North Sea, with particular reference to oil-production locations.

What is urgently needed is more information on: the feeding areas of seabirds during the breeding season; migration routes to and

from the breeding colonies; the winter feeding areas; and concentrations of seabirds at sea in relation to sea conditions.

A team of four, led by marine biologist Dr Barry Blake, is carrying out the research programme. The other three team members are ornithologists, including, as senior ornithologist, Peter Hope Jones, who has carried out a pilot research project over the last year. Working from the NCC's office in Aberdeen, the team will use offshore oil production structures, research and supply boats and hired aircraft to get their detailed information, with many of these facilities being made available by the oil companies working offshore.

In addition to the main aim of the research, the NCC, at the invitation of Shell Expro, will also investigate the incidence of birds being caught and burned in oil flares offshore, a problem on which hard facts are needed. For further information: Jean Ross, Press Officer, Nature Conservancy Council, 19/20 Belgrave Square, London SW1X 8PY (tel. 01-235 3241) or Amanda Ashton, Information Officer, Nature Conservancy Council, 12 Hope Terrace, Edinburgh EH9 2AS (tel. 031-447 4784).

Proposed marina at Langstone Harbour

The Secretary of State for the Environment made known his decision at the end of November on a public enquiry into applications by Portsmouth City Council and the Eastney Cruising Association for marinas at Eastney Lake, Langstone Harbour, Hampshire. The enquiry was held in October 1978 and the nature conservation organisations which opposed the application at the enquiry have been on tenterhooks for some time over the outcome. The Secretary of State turned down both applications, essentially on the grounds that they would be both visually obtrusive and unacceptable on nature conservation grounds. He specifically recognised the significance of the loss of intertidal muds which formed a vital part of the ecosystem of Langstone Harbour.

This is the second time that a consortium—which included the Nature Conservancy Council, the RSPB and the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Naturalists' Trust—has fought a public enquiry over this site, and it is to be hoped that Portsmouth City Council does not come back for a third try in a few years' time.

The Secretary of State's decision has implications for yet another marina application—this time for The Kench, Hayling

Island—involving the loss of intertidal muds in Langstone Harbour. The application has been called in by the Department of the Environment for a public enquiry.

The demise of the Council for Nature

After 21 years of trying to please everyone, the decision to cut off the life support systems and dissolve the Council for Nature was taken on 4th October 1979. All the Council's assets, including the name, have been transferred to the Committee for Environmental Conservation (29 Greville Street, London EC1N 8AK) with which the Council for Nature has worked closely in the past. *Habitat* will continue as an information leaflet for naturalists; published by CoEnCo, it will be obtainable for £3.50. The Conservation Liaison Committee of the Society for the Promotion of Nature Conservation will add to its liaison role. Future projects for youth work in nature conservation will be examined by a working party of CoEnCo. The Natural History Societies Committee is left homeless largely because it is not prepared to pay for and cannot afford the services they would like. The forum role which was one of the most important of the Council for Nature's functions will be fulfilled by a new CoEnCo committee.

So ends a good idea which was 'cuffed up'—to use a good Pembrokeshire term—from its inaugural meeting, at which pressure from the floor of the meeting forced a change in the original concept against the wishes of the organisers. At the end of the meeting, a representative of the city livery company which had intended to donate a substantial sum to the Council left the meeting with the cheque still in his pocket. In the early days, although the Council claimed to represent the voluntary nature conservation movement, it never really did, and few organisations were so thrilled by it that they were prepared to pay: in fact it was largely supported by the RSPB, the SPNC and particularly by the World Wildlife Fund. Its best offspring live on: the Conservation Corps, which the Council was glad to see leave the nest when it did, has turned into the flourishing British Trust for Conservation Volunteers; and *Habitat* moves to a new home.

'Operation Gannet' At the request of Alderney's Agriculture and Fisheries Committee, two Wessex helicopters from 177 RNAS Culdrose landed crewmen on to Ortac and Les Etacs rocks off the west coast of the

island on 28th November. Reports had been received that Gannets were becoming entangled in the pieces of netting which they had picked up off the sea when looking for nest material. Many birds had died, and local naturalist, Victor Mendham, and Tim Earl from Guernsey were consulted. The operation, carried out during the birds' absence from the rocks, lasted just two hours. Some 26 sacks of netting were collected, together with a number of rings.

Perhaps some other naval stations could be invited to help, elsewhere, out of the breeding season, with the removal from gannetries of the polypropylene netting which is apparently causing mortality among both adult and young Gannets.

Joyce Grenfell OBE (1910-1979)

The death of Joyce Grenfell will be regretted for a multitude of reasons, but by many people particularly for the pleasure she gave by her acting, her writing and her love of music: all of which brought her into the public eye. Her work with human charities and her love of nature were perhaps less well known. For more than 20 years, she had been a member of the RSPB, and, with her husband, had been a regular visitor to Minstern.

She was always willing to help charitable causes, and made public appearances on their behalf. In the field of natural history, her chief interest for many years was birds, but latterly she began to study wild flowers. In 1977, she presented the award for the *British Birds* 'Bird Photograph of the Year'. Her autobiography, *Joyce Grenfell Requests the Pleasure*, was published in 1976.



Charles Darwin Foundation. The CDF celebrated its 20th anniversary in the Van Straelen Hall at Academy Bay, Santa Cruz, Galapagos Islands, Ecuador. The latest *Noticias de Galapagos* (No. 30, 1979) contains the history of the Charles Darwin Research Station and the work that has been undertaken both by visiting scientists and by students from the University of Guayaquil, the Quito Polytechnic College, and the Catholic and Central Universities of Quito. The work of the Foundation is supported financially in a number of ways, but not least by individual supporters. Donations would

be gladly received by the Secretary General of the Charles Darwin Foundation, Greensted Hall, Ongar, Essex CM5 9LD.

Field Studies Council Once again the Field Studies Council has produced a wide-ranging programme of field courses for naturalists. While birdwatching is the theme of 38 of the courses, others cover general

natural history subjects, animals from midges to otters, flowers, archaeology, painting and photography. If any naturalists want to widen their range of interest they could do no better than try these courses. Further information from the Education Officer, Field Studies Council, Preston Montford, Montford Bridge, Shrewsbury SY4 1HW.

Opinions expressed in this feature are not necessarily those of the editors of British Birds

Recent reports

R. A. Hume and K. Allsopp

These are largely unchecked reports, not authenticated records

This report covers December, to which month all dates refer unless otherwise stated. During the first half of the month, the weather was predominantly cyclonic westerly. Winds were very strong at times and temperatures remained above freezing. A week of anticyclonic weather preceding Christmas, however, brought some frosty nights and a few days of easterlies. Snow showers developed in some areas. A return to westerly weather during the last week produced very heavy rainfall and gales in western districts, and very cold northerlies began on the last day of the year, causing some inland waters to ice over.

Seabirds

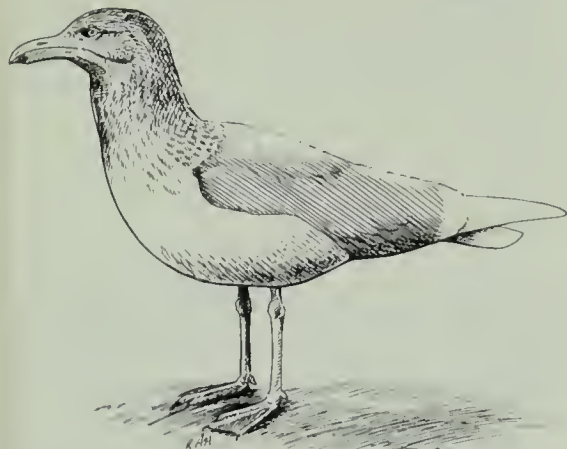
One or two further sightings of **White-billed Divers** *Gavia adamsii* came from Shetland early in the month. There were 100 **Red-throated Divers** *G. stellata* in the Benacre/Lowestoft area (Suffolk) on 16th and up to

seven **Black-throated Divers** *G. arctica* in Portland Harbour (Dorset). A total of 525 **Fulmars** *Fulmarus glacialis* passed north at Scarborough (North Yorkshire) on 19th and a **Sooty Shearwater** *Puffinus griseus* was there on 20th. Several **Arctic Skuas** *Stercorarius parasiticus* were in the same area at about that time and a **Great Skua** *S. skua* in the Dyfi estuary (Dyfed) on 19th. A **Laughing Gull** *Larus atricilla* occurred near Southend (Essex) from 29th November into December, the **Bonaparte's Gull** *L. philadelphia* from the autumn returned to Bangor (Down) on 31st and a **Ring-billed Gull** *L. delawarensis* was found at Irvine (Strathclyde) on 1st January. Also in early January, there was a **Sabine's Gull** *L. sabini* at Blakeney (Norfolk). **Ivory Gulls** *Pagophila eburnea* were reported from

99. Ivory Gull *Pagophila eburnea*, Northumberland, December 1979 (Stanley R. D. da Prato)



Scahouses (Northumberland) from 23rd to 25th (plate 99) and at Ballycotton (Cork) from 1st to 5th January: Christmas and New Year presents for a lucky (or fast-off-the-mark) few. **Glaucous Gulls** *L. hyperboreus*



were widespread, with up to three at Scarborough and four at Chasewater (Stafford) on 5th January. **Iceland Gulls** *L. glaucoides* were less readily found, but the old adult returned to New Brighton (Merseyside) and one or two were at Chasewater at the same time as the four Glaucous. **Little Auks** *Alle alle* were still very much a feature after the large autumn numbers. There were up to 300 at Porthgwarra (Cornwall) and 100 at St Ives (Cornwall) in November, 60 at the latter site on 29th and smaller groups at both these and several other localities, especially in the southwest and in eastern Ireland, into the New Year. Unhappily, 49 were found heavily oiled in northeast Shetland early in the month.

Waders and wildfowl

The **Greater Sand Plover** *Charadrius leschenaultii* remained at Chew Valley Lake (Avon) throughout the period, but became less dependable at its original spot. A **Sociable Plover** *Chettusia gregaria* was in the Headcorn (Kent) area from 16th to 21st. More unusual, two **Killdeers** *Charadrius vociferus* appeared on St Mary's (Scilly) on 11th, only to be joined by a third later that day and a fourth by early January: a remarkable multiple occurrence! At Blithfield Reservoir (Stafford), the **White-rumped Sandpiper** *Calidris fuscicollis* of early November reappeared from 8th to 11th.

A **Lesser White-fronted Goose** *Anser erythropus* arrived on cue at Slimbridge (Gloucester) late in December and there were two there early in January. Several Nearctic wildfowl occurred, including **Black Ducks** *Anas rubripes* at Paisley (Strathclyde)

late in December, at Shane's Castle (Antrim) from 30th November and in the Bull Island/Rogerstown area (Dublin) from 29th. Shane's Castle also produced an **American Wigeon** *A. americana* on 4th and, later, a **Teal** *A. crecca* of the Nearctic race *carolinensis* in one of those oddly productive and exciting spells which many places enjoy from time to time. More of these American Teals included one at Ballycotton on 2nd January and up to six in Cornwall. **Surf Scoters** *Melanitta perspicillata* were seen at Haverfordwest (Dyfed) in November and Southernness Point (Dumfries & Galloway) around the New Year period. Single **Ring-necked Ducks** *Aythya collaris* arrived at Scatness (Shetland) on 8th (staying into January), Tamar Lake (Devon/Cornwall) on the same date, Fordingbridge (Hampshire) in mid-month and at Dungeness (Kent) on Christmas Day. At Totnes (Devon), there were three on 4th January.

Out of season and unexpected migrants

A **Gull-billed Tern** *Gelochelidon nilotica* at Slapton Ley (Devon) on 7th was an unlikely species for the month and a **Hoopoe** *Upupa epops* at Padstow (Cornwall) in mid-month was hardly more seasonal. A **Richard's Pipit** *Anthus novaeseelandiae* at Cley (Norfolk) from mid-month into January was not quite so unusual. In late November, there was a **Stonechat** *Saxicola torquata* of one of the Siberian races *maura* or *stejnegeri* at Purl's Bridge (Cambridgeshire). Another **Nutcracker** *Nucifraga caryocatactes* was reported, from Walney Island (Cumbria) on 1st. **Two-barred Crossbills** *Loxia leucoptera* also followed up earlier reports, with one at



Haslemere (Surrey) on 24th, one at Sunninghill (Berkshire) later in the month and, more widely known and seen by hundreds of people, a male on Cannock Chase (Stafford) from 16th into January.

Finally, the **Belted Kingfisher** *Ceryle alcyon* stayed in Cornwall throughout the period; the Stour Valley (Kent) **Glossy Ibis** *Plegadis falcinellus* was joined by a second; and

a **Golden Eagle** *Aquila chrysaetos*—an extremely rare species in Shetland—was reported from Noss late in the month.

Latest news

At end of January, **Ivory Gull** at Portland and **Pied-billed Grebe** *Podilymbus podiceps* at Radipole (Dorset), latter seen at nearby Little Sea on 10th and 16th February.

Review

Discover Birds. Written and illustrated by D. I. M. Wallace. Whizzard Press/André Deutsch, London, 1979. 127 pages; several colour and black-and-white photographs; many colour and line illustrations. £4.95.

In recent years, there has been a plethora of books aimed at newcomers to birdwatching, but, where virtually all others have failed to convey either the techniques required or the thrills to be witnessed, Ian Wallace has succeeded most handsomely. Drawing extensively from his immense field experience, he has managed to portray the feeling of wonderment to be gained from field ornithology. At the same time, throughout the text he has explained the very necessary disciplines that all birdwatchers should apply to themselves during all aspects of the hobby, whether it be observation techniques, note-taking, avoidance of disturbance of breeding birds or personal safety of the observer.

The first chapter covers the evolution of birds most succinctly, without the bewildering scientific jargon so often used in such summaries. The next chapter on observation and identification techniques is highly instructive and not only beginners, but also advanced and expert birdwatchers, will benefit greatly from it. The third chapter, entitled bird studies and equipment, contains a wealth of very sound advice, particularly on the choice of equipment and literature.

The reader then accompanies the author and the photographer, Philip Sayer, on visits to seven of Ian's favourite stamping grounds. The special atmosphere that epitomises each locality comes over very well, and readers will be well primed on what to expect when they decide to go and see for themselves. For each location, Ian has included a double-page spread of coloured paintings depicting representative species at a particular season: February in Regent's Park, March on Islay, October in Scilly, late September/early October at Flamborough Head, June/July on Speyside, May/June at Walberswick, and October in north Norfolk. These paintings are superb: great accuracy, without the feather-by-feather detail that is so rarely seen in the field, and such jizz that you can almost see the birds flying, feeding, singing or whatever. The opportunist bird-photographs and scenic shots also do much to add to the character of each site.

The next section is a birdwatcher's calendar. The author takes the reader through the months of the year, outlining many of the opportunities available and pointing out a few of the pitfalls, such as missing out on the benefits of an early rise. His simple line-drawings in this section effectively illustrate seasonal moments.

The final chapter consists of four narratives from Ian's log-books: a winter day at Slimbridge, a spring day at Flamborough Head, a midsummer day in the depths of Wales and an October day in Scilly. Each account buzzes with his energy and enthusiasm and portrays the thrill, wonder and sometimes exasperation that is reward for the efforts of every birdwatcher. He shows that you should not be afraid of the weather, but learn to use it to your advantage. How the reviewer wishes that he had had Ian's diligence at note-taking during the weekend of 4th/5th November 1961 in north Norfolk, when so much was happening in the avian world.

This is a very personal book with 37 years of experience on offer to the reader. Whether your life-list is 35 species or 350 species, buy it and reap the reward.

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Volume 78 Number 4 April 1986



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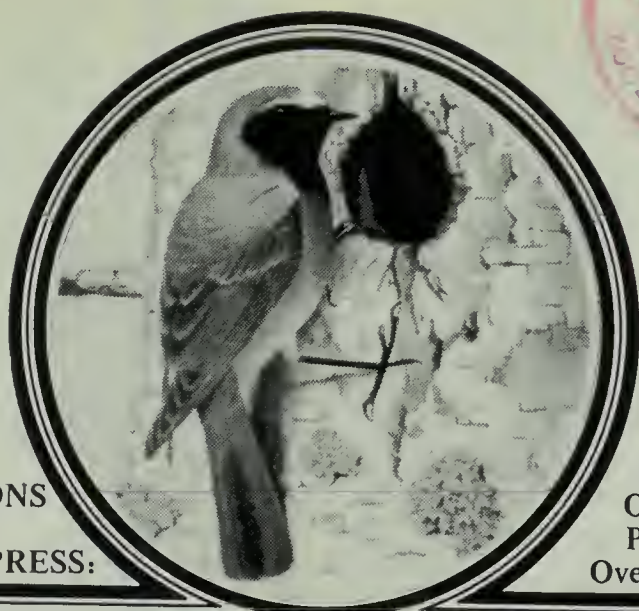
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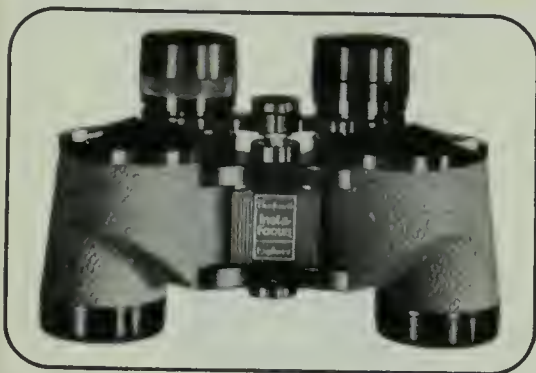
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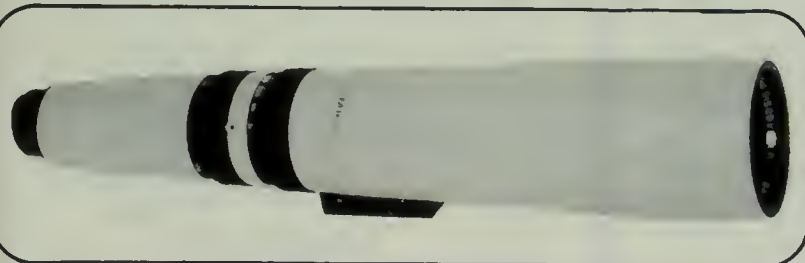
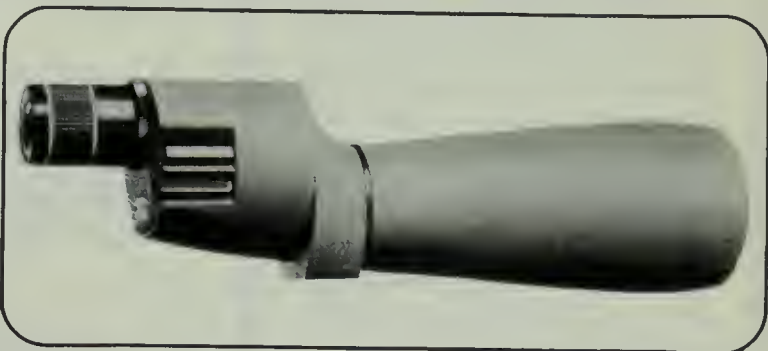
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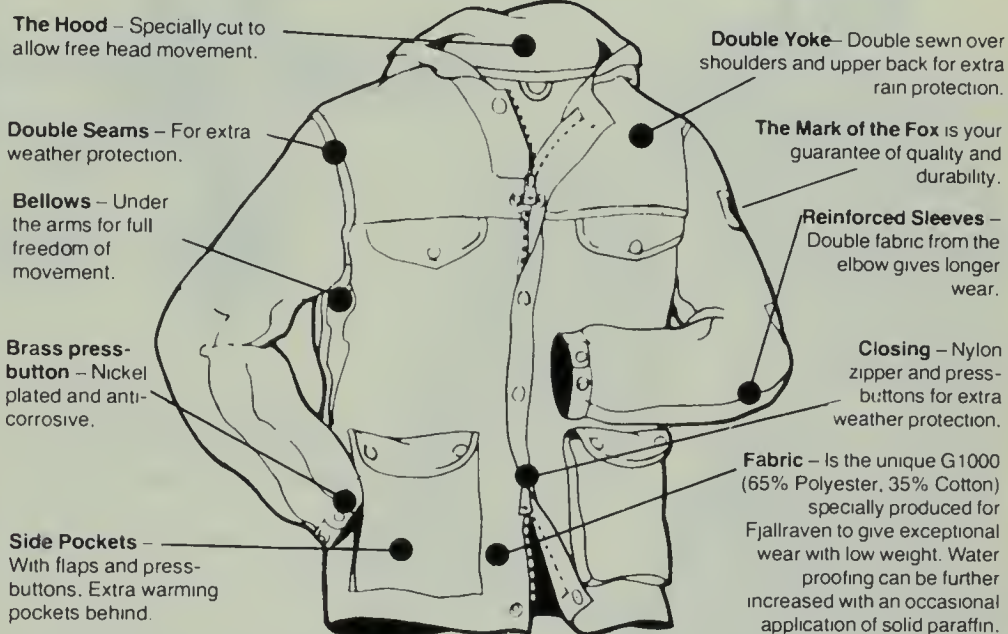
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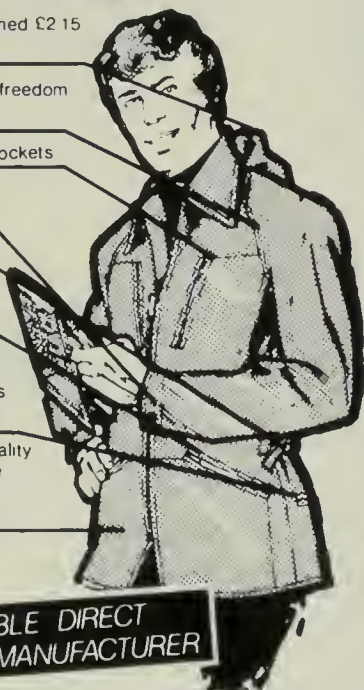
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British Birds

VOLUME 73 NUMBER 4 APRIL 1980



Breeding biology of the Little Owl

*David Glue and
Derick Scott*



A century has elapsed since the first of the Little Owls introduced into Britain bred successfully, yet comparatively little has been published about the species' breeding biology

This paper combines the findings of intensive local studies of Little Owls *Athene noctua* at 14 nests by DG in Hampshire during 1962-70, and at a further 22 nests by DS in Lincolnshire and North Nottinghamshire during 1950-77, with information from 549 cards submitted to the BTO's Nest Records Scheme during 1939-75.

Distribution of records

The Little Owl is not indigenous to Britain, although it can be found across Europe north to Denmark. Introductions to Yorkshire in 1842 failed, and to Kent during 1874-80 met with only partial success. Releases with lasting consequences were in Northamptonshire during 1888-90, and in Yorkshire,

Hampshire and Hertfordshire in the 1890s (Witherby & Ticehurst 1908). From these and later centres, there followed a population explosion, mainly during 1910-30 (documented by Witherby *et al.* 1940). Subsequently, the range expanded more slowly, though with local decreases, until today the Little Owl is accepted as a characteristic member of the avifauna of rural southern Britain, having bred at some time in all the historic English and Welsh counties.

During 1968-72, an extensive effort was made to confirm breeding in as many 10-km squares as possible for *The Atlas* (Sharrock 1976). The results (fig. 1) indicate that the Little Owl now breeds widely over most of England and much of Wales, being absent chiefly from the higher ground of northern England, the southwest peninsula, and parts of central and west Wales. In Scotland, where breeding was first proved in Berwickshire in 1958, *The Atlas* shows a small population still confined to the lowlands in the south-east, with breeding confirmed only as far north as Midlothian. There have been few confirmed sightings of Little Owls in Ireland, and no attempt at nesting.

The 549 nest records under review come from 41 counties which cover most of the breeding range as shown by *The Atlas* (see table 1). Ten counties supplied 20 or more records, ranging from Kent and Essex in the southeast, and Devon and Somerset in the southwest, to Lancashire and Yorkshire in the north. Warwickshire provided the highest county total of 112 records, the bulk resulting from a survey, by D. R. Cooper, J. Hardman and R. J. Jukes during 1968-71, of the avian predators on 2,320 ha of mixed farmland in the southwest of the county.

The chronological sequence of nest records indicates a marked increase in recording effort in recent years caused by a greater interest in the smaller birds of prey and the stimulus of *Atlas* fieldwork: 1936-45, 3; 1946-55, 80; 1956-65, 105; 1966-75, 361.

Breeding habitat

The Little Owl has successfully occupied a wide range of habitats in Britain (table 2), but breeds chiefly on agricultural land, particularly where there is plenty of timber, whether in the form of well-established hedgerows, copses,

Table 1. Regional distribution of BTO nest record cards of Little Owls *Athene noctua*, 1939-75

Regions are secondary divisions of the Euring code			
Region	No. of counties	No. of nests	% of total nests
Southwest England	7	107	19.5
Southeast England	10	157	28.6
Eastern England	5	32	5.8
Central England	9	147	26.8
Northern England	6	89	16.2
Wales	4	17	3.1
Ireland	0	0	0
Scotland	0	0	0
TOTALS	41	549	100.0

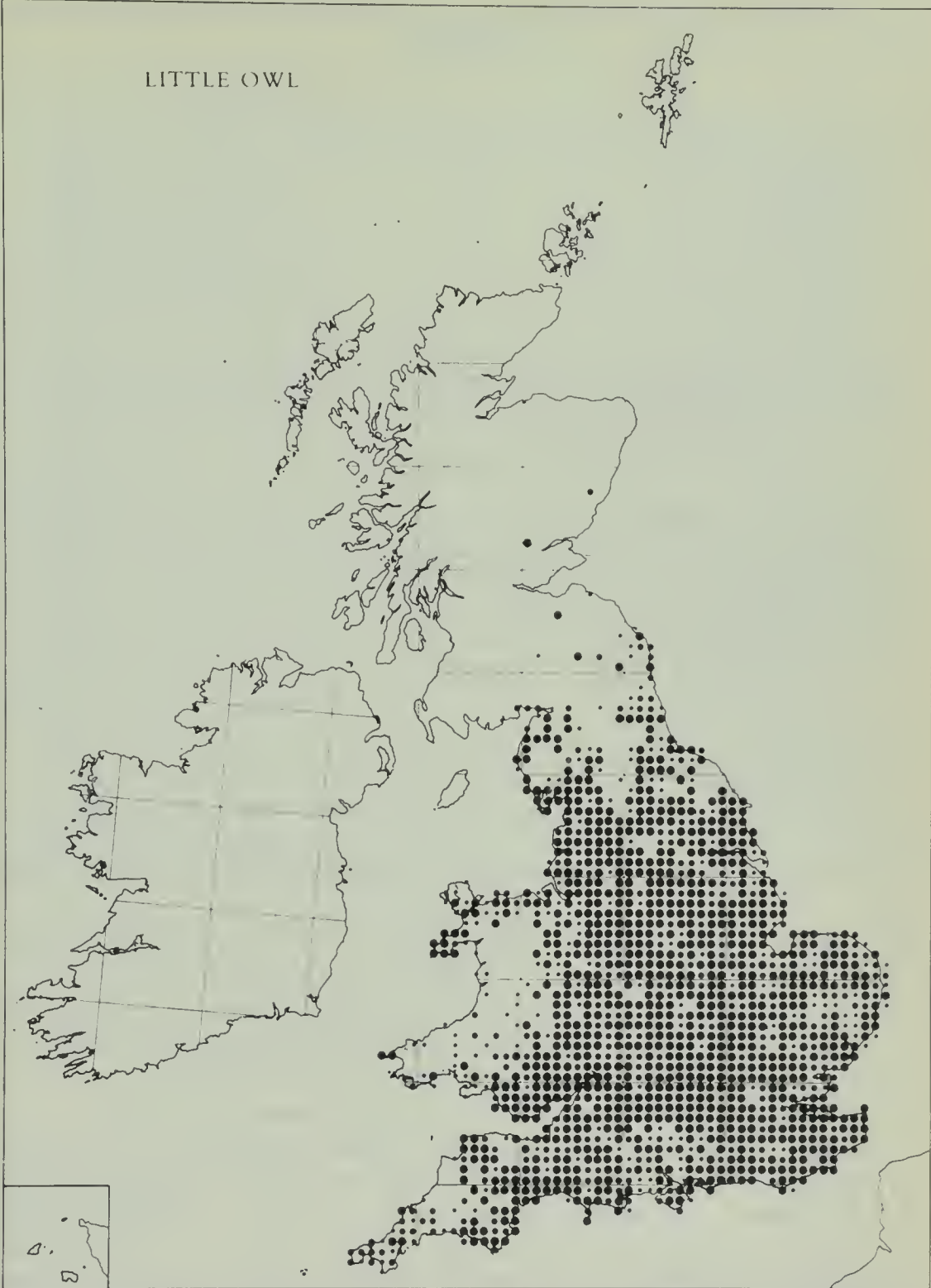


Figure 1. Breeding distribution of the Little Owl *Athene noctua* in Britain and Ireland during 1968-72 (reproduced, by permission, from *The Atlas of Breeding Birds in Britain and Ireland*). The smallest dots indicate possible breeding, medium dots probable, and largest dots confirmed breeding, within each 10-km square

orchards or woods. On a local scale, the population appears to be very unevenly distributed across the current breeding range—including the prime habitat, farmland—and merits a detailed study to determine the limiting factors. Within Hampshire, for instance, ‘clusters’ of pairs at points along river valleys suggest local preferences for damp pasture,

Table 2. Breeding habitats of 486 Little Owls *Athene noctua* in England and Wales, 1939-75

Broad habitat type	No. of nests	%
FARMLAND 361 (74.3%)		
Lowland pasture	125	25.7
Mixed farmland	122	25.1
Arable farmland	63	13.0
Water meadows/wet pasture	33	6.8
Hill pasture	18	3.7
WOODLAND 59 (12.1%)		
Extensive orchard	37	7.6
Parkland	13	2.7
Open deciduous woodland	9	1.8
GARDENS AND HABITATIONS 51 (10.5%)		
Sewage-farm	14	2.9
Rural garden	9	1.9
Quarry, gravel-pit, colliery	6	1.2
Golf course	5	1.0
Miscellaneous*	17	3.6
HEATH AND MOOR 6 (1.2%)		
Heather-grass moor	3	0.6
Lowland heath and common	3	0.6
WETLANDS 6 (1.2%)		
Freshwater marsh, carr	6	1.2
COASTAL 3 (0.6%)		
Rocky headland, coastal cliff	2	0.4
Offshore island	1	0.2
TOTALS	486	100.0

*Miscellaneous includes cemetery 3, industrial waste ground 3, allotments 2, suburban garden 2, disused airfield 2, castle 2, hospital grounds 1, reservoir 1, disused railway 1

especially water-meadows, although, elsewhere, open country bordering woodland, tree-dotted parkland, wooded hamlets and areas of chalk downland support more pairs than surrounding terrain (DG). It is not unusual for pairs to breed in close proximity. In north Nottinghamshire in 1975, two nests in willows *Salix* were just 240 m apart; another two pairs nesting in a haystack and an ash *Fraxinus excelsior* were 320 m apart in 1977-78.

Most Little Owls become confiding during the breeding season and, with caution, allow close observation, although as a rule the species will not tolerate blatant and persistent disturbance at the roost or the nest. This probably accounts for the owl's general affinity for open country, private land and areas with limited access to the public, breeding so often as it does on farmland and parkland, at sites such as sewage-farms and golf courses, and often in the vicinity of ruins, abandoned settlements and isolated buildings. Those birds which occupy residential or industrial land do so where suitable ground is available nearby, usually in the form of playing fields, cemeteries or waste ground.

Within its breeding range in Britain, the Little Owl avoids many upland areas, 85% of the nests studied being below 400 feet (122 m) (table 3). Treeless areas such as sand-dunes, reclaimed saltings, sea cliffs and islands are sometimes occupied; so are upland pasture and improved moorland,

Table 3. Altitudinal distribution of 355 nests of Little Owls *Athene noctua* in England and Wales, 1939-75

Altitude in feet (metres)	No. of nests	%
0-200 (0-61)	214	60.3
201-400 (61-122)	88	24.8
401-600 (122-183)	32	9.0
601-800 (183-244)	17	4.8
801-1,000 (244-305)	3	0.8
1,001-1,250 (305-381)	1	0.3
TOTALS	355	100.0

the highest nests being found at 1,000 feet (305 m) in the Rossendale Valley, Lancashire, and 1,050 feet (320 m) near Keighley, Yorkshire.

Nesting site

The most frequently used nesting place in lowland Britain is a hole in a deciduous tree, at an average height above the ground of only 10 feet (3 m) (table 4); in fact, 92% of the 526 nests examined in detail were in trees. Hollow oaks *Quercus* (24%) and ash (23%) were those most regularly occupied, though the large number of fruit trees (18%) and willows (15%) used emphasises a strong local association with orchards and pollarded timber.

Spherical holes and vertical cracks leading to chambers in the main trunk (37%) and lateral branches (23%) of mature trees with decaying heart-wood are the chief sites used (267 nesting trees examined, table 5). Certain sites in trees are used more often by the Little Owl than by any of the other three regular tree-nesting owls: in particular, holes in the bole, narrow side

Table 4. Tree sites of 482 nests of Little Owls *Athene noctua* in England and Wales, 1939-75

Under 'HEIGHT OF NEST' a, b, c, d and e correspond respectively to: 1-5 feet (0.3-1.5 m), 6-10 (1.8-3.0), 11-20 (3.4-6.1), 21-30 (6.4-9.1) and 31-40 (9.4-12.2)

	No. of nests	HEIGHT OF NEST					Average nest height in feet (m)
		a	b	c	d	e	
Oak <i>Quercus</i>	105	15	39	45	4	2	11 (3.4)
Ash <i>Fraxinus excelsior</i>	100	12	42	43	3	0	11 (3.4)
Fruit trees*	75	29	38	8	0	0	6 (1.8)
Willow <i>Salix</i>	63	19	35	9	0	0	7 (2.1)
Elm <i>Ulmus</i>	55	5	19	30	1	0	12 (3.7)
Beech <i>Fagus sylvatica</i>	10	1	2	5	2	0	13 (4.0)
Other trees**	20	7	5	7	1	0	10 (3.0)
Unidentified trees	54	15	20	17	2	0	9 (2.7)
TOTALS	482	103	200	164	13	2	10 (3.0)

*Fruit trees include apple *Malus domestica* (63), pear *Pyrus pyraeaster* (7), cherry *Prunus avium* (4) and plum *Prunus domestica* (1).

**Other trees: field maple *Acer campestre* (4), hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna* (3), horse-chestnut *Aesculus hippocastanum* (2), poplar *Populus* (2), alder *Alnus glutinosa* (1), sycamore *Acer pseudoplatanus* (1), holly *Ilex aquifolium* (1), hazel *Corylus avellana* (1), hornbeam *Carpinus berulus* (1), walnut *Juglans regia* (1), elder *Sambucus nigra* (1), lime *Tilia cordata* (1), sweet chestnut *Castanea sativa* (1). (A hollow, dead Scots pine *Pinus sylvestris* occupied in north Lincolnshire in 1969 was the only coniferous tree recorded.)

Table 5. Position of nest in 267 trees occupied by Little Owls *Athene noctua* in England and Wales, 1939-75

Position of nest	No. of nests	%
Main trunk: cleft, crack or cavity	98	36.7
Hollow branch: split or cavity	61	22.9
Pollarded tree: cavity or branch cluster	38	14.2
Snapped-off trunk or decaying stump: vertical hollow	24	9.0
Tree bole or among roots	23	8.6
Wooden nestbox	14	5.2
Fallen trunk or branch: crack or cavity	7	2.6
Old nest of Magpie <i>Pica pica</i> or drey of grey squirrel <i>Sciurus carolinensis</i>	2	0.8
TOTALS	267	100.0

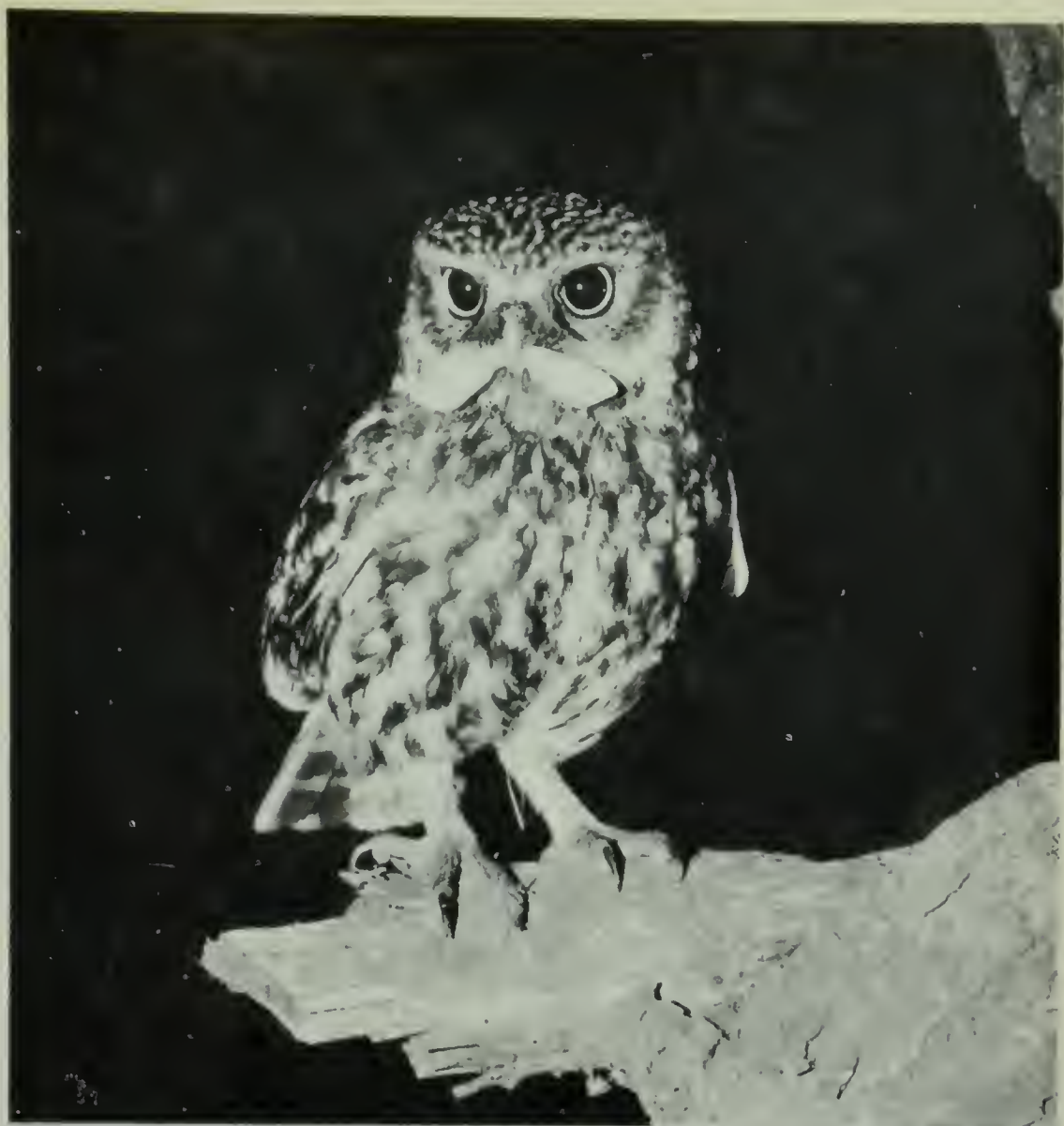
limbs, fallen boughs, spaces between the washed out roots of standing trees, and enclaves formed by clusters of branches in pollarded trees.

The Little Owl often nests and hunts over much the same ground as the Barn Owl *Tyto alba*, even sharing the same nest tree on occasions and breeding successfully as little as 2 m apart. The former, however, is better equipped to exploit many more lower, smaller cracks and cavities in smaller trees (table 4): apple *Malus domestica*, pear *Pyrus pyraeaster*, field maple *Acer campestre* and hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna*, with hollow-trunk and branch diameters as little as 8 inches (20 cm).

On occasions, cavities with an extremely narrow entrance are used, sometimes too small to allow access by an adult human arm. This habit, coupled with a preference for deep, winding cavities, can make observation of the breeding cycle very difficult. Ten nest chambers measured ranged from 4 to 18 inches (10-50 cm) in width, averaging 8 inches (20 cm), though a further two nest scrapes were situated in one of several small side pockets to chambers 36 inches (90 cm) in width. Most chambers were reached by narrow passages usually 18-48 inches (0.5-1.3 m) long, and averaging 32 inches (80 cm) for the 74 measured, though a few were considerably longer, with two or more exits.

The Little Owl will use nest sites below ground level and in buildings, particularly where there is a shortage of suitable trees. Six nests were in rock clefts or burrows of rabbits *Oryctolagus cuniculus* in coastal cliffs (2), laneside banks (2), an inland crag (1) and a quarry face (1). On Bardsey Island in Gwynedd, the few resident pairs nest in rabbit holes and in dry-stone walls. Elsewhere, Little Owls have nested in gravel- and sand-pit tunnels (Hampshire) and inside stacked peat on moorland (South Yorkshire).

Hollow trees may be shared by other species, a point well illustrated by a decaying ash tree in north Nottinghamshire in 1968, where three species bred successfully: Kestrels *Falco tinnunculus* occupied a hole near the tree crown (10 m), Little Owls a hole in the side of the trunk (4 m), and Wrens *Troglodytes troglodytes* ivy *Hedera helix* near the tree base. There were five instances of chambers being used that had been excavated initially by woodpeckers: three by Great Spotted *Dendrocopos major* and two by Green *Picus viridis*.

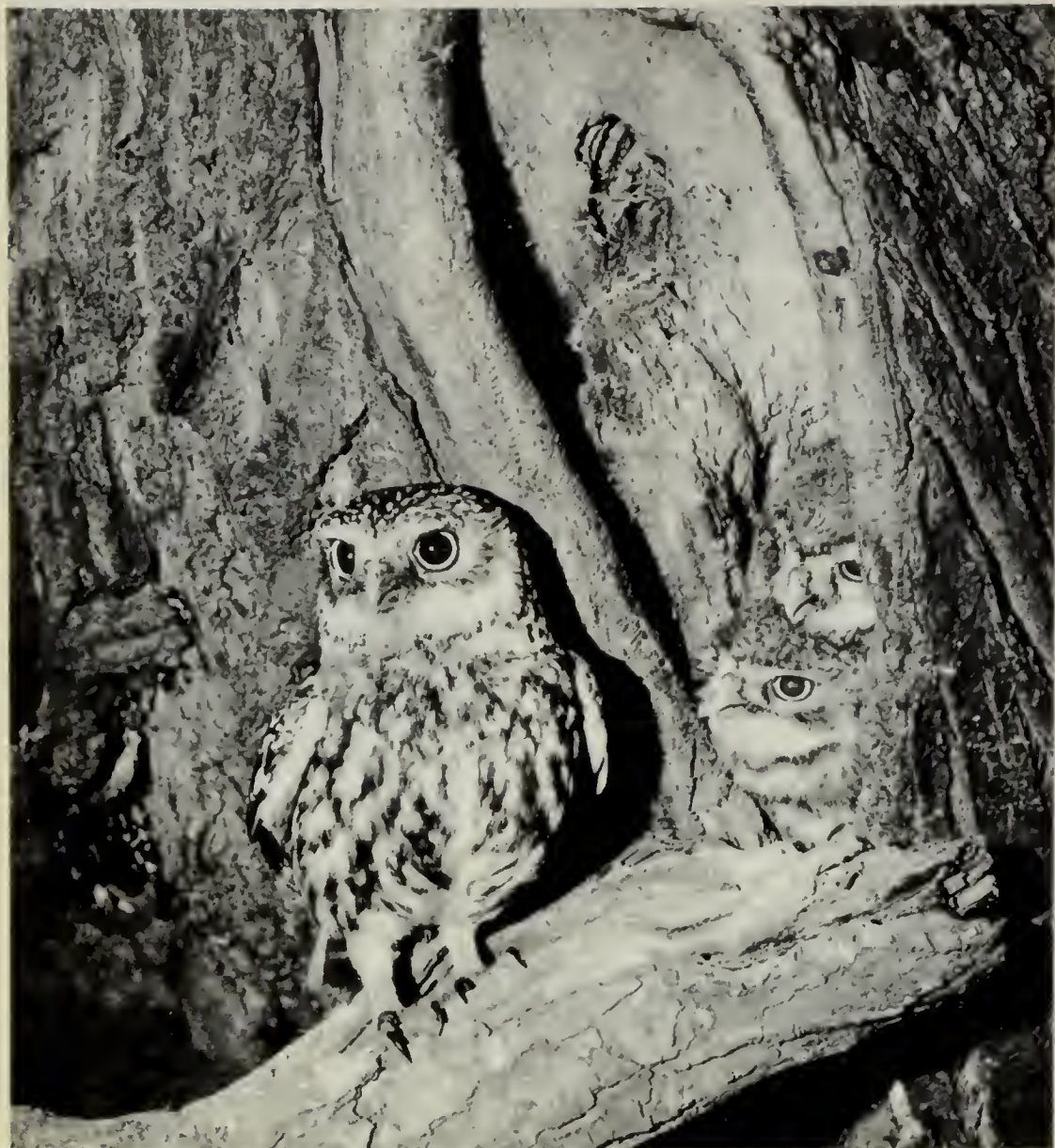


100. Male Little Owl *Athene noctua* carrying male ghost swift moth *Hepialus humuli*, Nottinghamshire, June 1972 (Derick Scott)

Man-made structures of various types held 35 (7%) of the nests examined, comprising barns (13), outbuildings such as an army hut, a garden potting shed, and a sewage-farm store (7), cattlesheds, stables and a piggery (5), derelict farmhouses (4), disused industrial buildings (3), haystacks (2) and a ruin (1). Regular nesting places included cavities in a roof or a wall, often under loose slates or tiles, among dislodged straw bales, sometimes inside chimneys or ventilation shafts or between receptacles such as wooden boxes, stone jars or pipes.

Breeding season

There is normally little activity until the end of January or beginning of February, when males begin marking their territories. These are usually quite small in area, averaging 87 acres (35 ha) on water-meadows in Hampshire and 95 acres (38 ha) on mixed farmland in Warwickshire (eight and 11 territories mapped respectively). Marking is achieved by the males singing from some favourite tree, telegraph post, or fence post within the territory. The main activity does not start until March, when it is possible to hear as many as six males competing with each other (DS).



101. Male Little Owl *Athene noctua* with two 3½-week-old young at nest-hole, Nottinghamshire, June 1973 (Derick Scott)

The Little Owl has a great variety of call notes, but during courtship the male utters a loud 'hooo-oo, hooo-oo' and the female shrieks and yelps in answer. The male usually flies round and round the perching female, often quite close to their nest site. Before copulation they face each other on a tree branch or a fence, where the male bobs up and down, weaving and dancing before her. She in turn bobs up and down and then slightly opens and flutters her lowered wings before copulation. Occasionally, the two owls pursue one another in flight with great agility, the male sometimes hovering above the sitting female.

Both pair-bond and site-tenacity appear strong, though a long-term marking study is needed. Ringed adults caught by hand at the nest or in mist-nets regularly over three and four years indicate that some individuals do occupy the same territory in successive years; since pairs are frequently recorded during winter, it seems likely that, as a general rule, the pair-bond is unbroken as long as both partners survive. Certain 'traditional' nest sites

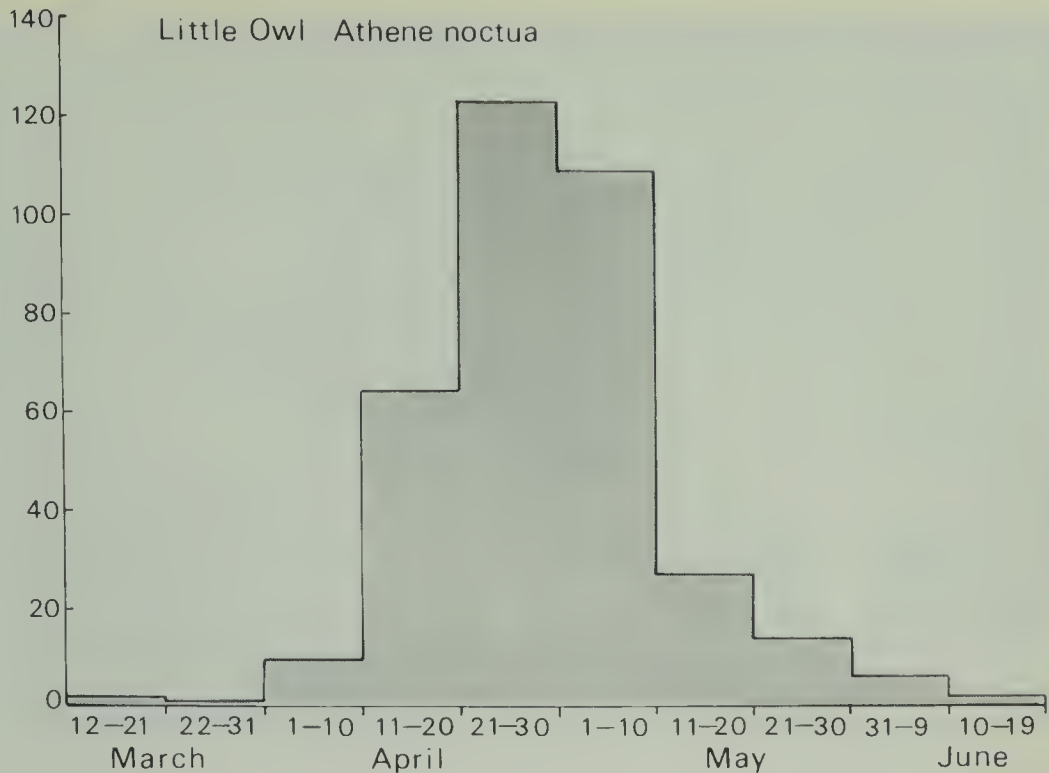


Figure 2. First-egg laying dates at 357 nests of Little Owls *Athene noctua* in England and Wales, 1939-77. Mean laying date 28th April

have now held Little Owls for over 25 years. The recovery of ringed Little Owls at the nest during their first summer indicates an early maturity, though it is not uncommon to find non-breeding and unmated individuals on territory through the breeding season.

First-egg dates were calculated for nests where the timing of egg-laying, egg-hatching or young fledging was known, or where the young could be accurately aged. Data from 357 nests show (fig. 2) that the Little Owl has a highly synchronised laying period: the shortest breeding season of any of the five owl species breeding regularly in Britain. Laying is almost exclusively confined to April and May, 83% of the clutches being started between 11th April and 10th May (mean 28th April, including any repeats). The laying season spans 16th March (Lincolnshire in 1950) to 19th June (Lincolnshire in 1967).

The latest laying date marks the only instance of a second brood. At a traditional nest site in Lincolnshire, three young fledged from the first clutch started on 12th April, then a further two young hatched from a second clutch in the same nest on 18th July and left on 19th August. Today, second broods are rare, contradicting earlier statements suggesting that they are 'occasional' (e.g. Walpole-Bond 1938, Fisher 1951). Lost clutches are not often replaced. Three replacement clutches were confirmed in the present study and a further three cases are known from egg-collectors operating in the 1930s and 1940s. All were laid in the original nest.

Clutch size

Clutches were considered complete when two or more visits made to an active nest during incubation over 48 hours apart showed no increase in the number of eggs. From 268 nests, clutches of three and four eggs are shown



102. Little Owl *Athene noctua* about to feed earthworm to 3½-week-old young, Nottinghamshire, June 1973 (Derick Scott)

to be usual, two and five occasional, one, six and seven rare (table 6), though clutches of eight have been recorded (Witherby *et al.* 1940). Replacement clutches were of three (five occasions) or four (once) eggs.

Little Owl eggs are white, broad ellipse in shape, with no gloss. They are usually laid on consecutive days in a crude scrape, there being no determined attempt at nest construction. Incubation is by the female alone, and normally begins when the first egg is laid, but sometimes not until the clutch is completed. Estimates of the length of the incubation period vary (e.g. 24-25 days, Campbell & Ferguson-Lees 1972; 28-29 days, Witherby *et al.* 1940), the present study indicating that the eggs may hatch between 28 and 33 days. During this time, and from hatching up to the fourteenth to sixteenth day, the female leaves the nest for brief periods only, relying on the male for food.

Brood size and breeding success

The female feeds the newly-hatched young; only rarely is she assisted by the male. At some nests during this stage, the male will call the female off the

Table 6. Numbers and sizes of 268 clutches of Little Owls *Athene noctua*

Data from 182 BTO nest records collected throughout England and Wales combined with 86 records from local study in Lincolnshire and Nottinghamshire (DS)

	CLUTCH SIZE							Average clutch size
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
BTO nest records	2	20	75	69	13	1	2	3.45
Lincs./Notts.	1	6	20	36	22	1	0	3.87
TOTALS (268)	3	26	95	105	35	2	2	3.59
%	1	10	35	39	13	1	1	—

nest and transfer the food to her. She in turn flies back to the nest and feeds the young. From about the fourteenth day until fledging, both sexes share in the feeding. The main feeding time is from dusk to midnight, with a break of two hours before a resumption of feeding activity until dawn. Little hunting takes place during the day, and food items are rarely brought to the nest in daylight. After about 12-14 days, the young produce hunger cries: a continuous wheezing sound. Later, they utter tongue-clicking noises similar to those produced by other owls. During times of anxiety or excitement, the male often gives a sharp, repetitive 'kek-kek-kek-kek' call near the nest, the female sometimes answering with a rather grating 'shar'.

Estimates of the length of the fledging period vary: Witherby *et al.* (1940) gave 'about 26 days' (apparently based on a single record), but most authors suggest 3½-4½ weeks. Such variations are probably caused by the tendency for some unfledged young to leave the shelter of their nest cavities before they are fully grown and while they are still largely incapable of flight. Young may be found hiding among the roots of the nest after as few as 14 days. Many such young are capable of returning unaided to the nest and eventually fledging, but this behaviour has an adverse effect on their survival chances. The present study shows that young fledge (i.e. leave the nest more or less fully developed and capable of flight) after 30-35 days, and the majority after 32-34 days, but it is not unknown for broods to stay as long as 43 days, though they are probably capable of leaving before this.

Confirmed brood sizes were defined as those where the young were observed to fly or were thought capable of leaving the nest when last seen. The average brood size at 241 nests was 2.40 (table 7), one, two or three young being usual, five the maximum. Of 477 eggs laid, at least 269 103. Male Little Owl *Athene noctua* about to feed moth to 3½-week-old young, Nottinghamshire, June 1973 (Derick Scott)

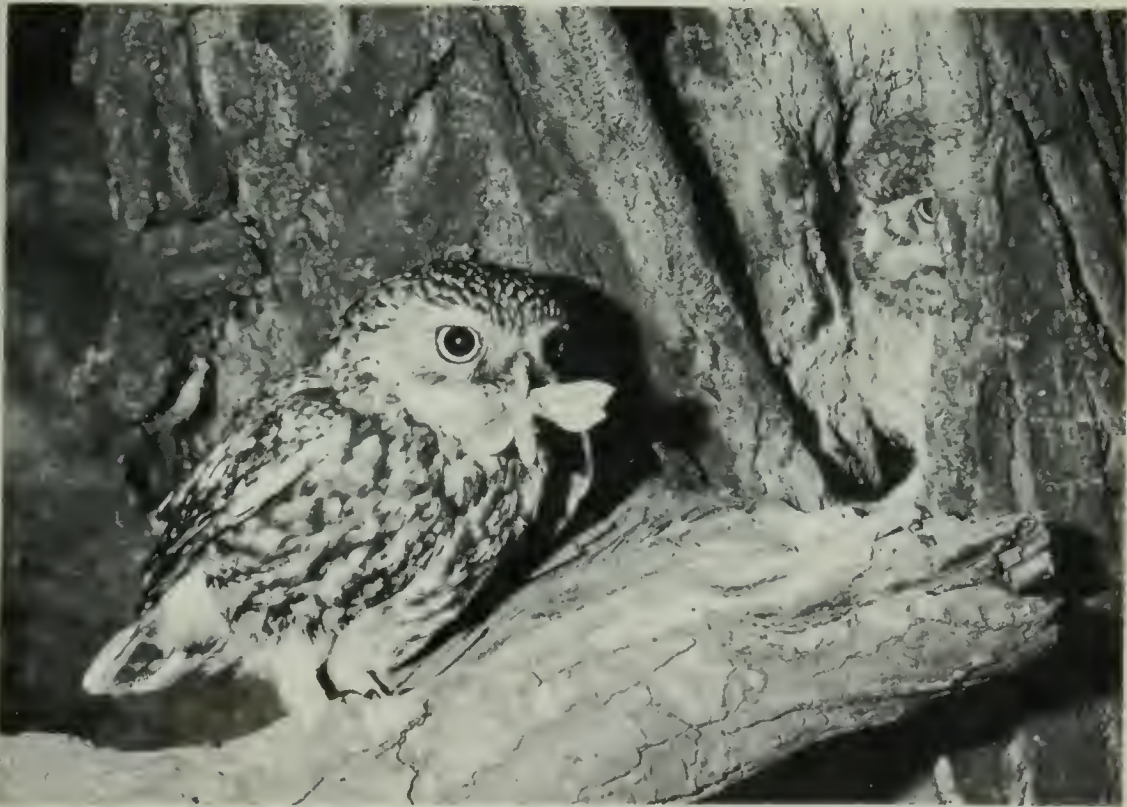


Table 7. Sizes of 241 broods of Little Owls *Athene noctua*

Data from 167 BTO nest records collected throughout England and Wales combined with 74 records from local study in Lincolnshire and Nottinghamshire (DS)

	BROOD SIZE					Average brood size
	1	2	3	4	5	
BTO nest records	38	55	54	15	5	2.36
Lincs./Notts.	12	24	32	4	2	2.46
TOTALS (241)	50	79	86	19	7	2.40
%	21	33	36	8	3	—

hatched, and 234 young flew. From 156 clutches started, 43 (28%) failed during laying, involving 108 eggs, a further 41 (26%) failed during the incubation or fledging periods, but 72 (46%) raised one or more young (table 8). Complete losses of clutches and, to a lesser extent, of broods were frequent, but, of the 113 clutches completed (table 8), 32 (28%) raised the full clutch to produce flying young.

The causes of 52 failures are known: eggs taken by man (14), Magpie *Pica pica* (1), fox *Vulpes vulpes* (1), stoat *Mustela erminea* (1), hedgehog *Erinaceus europaeus* (1); young taken or killed by man (6), fox (1), stoat (1), common rat *Rattus norvegicus* (1); adults shot by man (4), killed by stoat (1), by domestic cat *Felis ‘domestica’* (1); nest chamber deliberately blocked by man (4); tree felled (3); eggs infertile or addled (2); nest cavity collapsed (2); hay bales dislodged (2); eggs and young saturated by rain (2); deserted after disturbance by machinery (2); nest tree struck by lightning (1); nest in willow taken over by Shelducks *Tadorna tadorna* (1).

It is disturbing to note continued deliberate destruction of breeding Little Owls at many sites. Deemed undesirable earlier this century because of alleged attacks on poultry and game-birds, an exhaustive study by Hibbert-Ware (1936-37) demonstrated that the diet is composed chiefly of insects such as beetles and moths, earthworms, small rodents and a few

Table 8. Outcome of 113 completed clutches of Little Owls *Athene noctua* in England and Wales, 1939-75

‘BROOD SIZE’ refers to number successfully leaving nest; totals in italics are those where all eggs resulted in fledged young

Clutch size	Number of clutches	No. failing to hatch or fledge	BROOD SIZE				
			1	2	3	4	5
1	2	1	<i>1</i>	—	—	—	—
2	15	6	4	5	—	—	—
3	57	19	6	13	<i>19</i>	—	—
4	31	12	3	4	7	5	—
5	7	2	0	2	1	0	2
6	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
7	1	1	0	0	0	0	0
TOTALS	113	41	14	24	27	5	2



104. Female Little Owl *Athene noctua* with four-week-old young, Nottinghamshire, July 1977
(Derick Scott)

smaller birds, the latter largely common species such as Starling *Sturnus vulgaris* and House Sparrow *Passer domesticus*. Ringing recoveries provide further evidence of Little Owls shot and trapped annually by man (Glue 1971, 1973), especially at the nest. Successful young are able to fly well within a week of leaving the nest, though they are still fed by their parents for up to one month after fledging, a feature also noted in the Netherlands (Haverschmidt 1946). Dispersal usually takes place within four or five weeks, but juvenile Little Owls may still be seen with their parents into September. June to September, the four months from fledging to independence, is the testing time for the young, 60% of Little Owls ringed as nestlings being recovered then, with inexperienced youngsters found emaciated, dead beneath wires, on roads or railway lines, or killed by man (Glue 1971) and other predators. Having gained experience and secured a territory by October, first-years are better equipped to contribute to the coming breeding season.

Acknowledgements

We are very grateful to all the people who submitted the BTO nest record cards that form the backbone of this paper. Dr G. Hiron and R. A. Morgan commented helpfully on the first draft of the paper, and Mrs E. Murray kindly drew fig. 2.

Summary

This breeding biology study of the Little Owl *Athene noctua* in England and Wales is based on 585 nests examined during 1939-77. The species breeds widely over much of lowland Britain, 85% of the nests being below 400 feet (122 m), but a few as high as 1,050 feet (320 m). Well-timbered farmland is the chief habitat (agricultural land holds 74% of the nests), with fewer in woodland (12%), gardens and built-up areas (10%), and only occasional pairs on heath, moor, marsh, coastal ground, tree-less hill pasture, sand-dunes and islands. Holes in deciduous trees provide 92% of the nesting places. Oaks *Quercus*, ash *Fraxinus excelsior*, willows *Salix* and fruit trees are the main trees occupied. Most nest chambers are reached by narrow, winding channels in hollow main trunks, lateral branches, snapped off trunks, pollarded trees or fallen boughs; rarely, the old nest of another animal is used. Ground nests (1% of the total) were usually in burrows of rabbits *Oryctolagus cuniculus* or rock clefts. Buildings held 7% of the nests, chiefly barns, other outbuildings and derelict farmsteads; these were mainly in upland areas lacking suitable hollow trees.

The laying season extends from mid March to mid June, but the great majority of clutches are laid during late April and early May (mean for first egg, 28th April). Replacement clutches are infrequent and second broods exceptional. The clutch size ranges from one to seven eggs, though usually three or four (mean 3.59). Incubation, by the female alone, takes 28-33 days. Most broods are composed of one, two or three young (mean 2.40), and the full clutch is frequently raised to fly. The young normally fledge after 32-34 days, and disperse within four to five weeks, though may be seen with their parents into September.

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Mystery photographs

40 This mystery bird (right and plate 97) would quickly resolve itself in the field, presenting different views in a variety of lighting situations. A single, unmoving



photograph, however, is a nice problem. Shape and structure quickly rule out larger birds, and the dark trailing edge to the outer wing dashes hopes of a Roseate Tern *Sterna dougallii* (which has the white on the inner webs of the primaries reaching right to the tip), so it must be either an Arctic *S. paradisaea* or a Common Tern *S. hirundo*. Thick wings with the tips relatively broad rather than attenuated suggest Common . . . but are those outer primaries translucent, a characteristic feature of Arctic?

In fact, the bird is strongly lit from the side, and the underside is in soft shadow. Only the outer features of the right wing show brilliant white where the sunlight filters strongly through. Each feather has a long band of pure white on the inner web, and any such feather will look semi-transparent when catching the light like this. The left wing shows its true tonal values to perfection, beautifully lit in this portrait. Both Common and Arctic will show opaque white in the shade; translucency can appear only with strong backlighting. The outer feather, however, shows perfectly the relative width of black and white on the inner web alongside the white shaft: a feature useful on specimens and in photographs but not, of course, in the field. The breadth of the black in this case clearly indicates Common. More obviously, only five outer primaries show blackish tips (which are relatively broad): the remaining five are pale. On an Arctic Tern (see plate 105), there is far less black on the longest primary and the dark tips are narrower but extend inwards across seven or eight feathers, gradually tapering away to nothing instead of being abruptly truncated. So, although covered in a previous 'Mystery photographs' (*Brit. Birds* 72: 182-183, plate 40), this bird is another Common Tern; it was photographed in Co. Wexford in June 1976 by Richard T. Mills. Given a slight tilt to its right, the translucent inner primaries would show contrastingly pale against the more opaque

105. Arctic Tern *Sterna paradisaea*, Northumberland, June 1967 (David & Katie Urry)



outer ones: a function of structural difference rather than true colour. An Arctic, of course, would show translucency through the remiges.

R. A. HUME

106. Mystery photograph 41. Identify the species. Answer next month



Notes

Diving times of Great Northern Diver on frozen inland loch

On 27th November 1977, a Great Northern Diver *Gavia immer* was present inland at Mochrum Loch, Galloway, which was completely frozen over except for a small channel about 10 m long, where it was apparently feeding in water possibly more than 3 m deep. During the periods 10.10-10.43 and 13.48-14.05 GMT it dived on 30 and 14 occasions, respectively, and remained submerged for periods of from 30 to 62 seconds (mean 46.6 seconds, standard deviation ± 7.02). Of the total of 44 dives, only two (62 seconds each) were over one minute. Table 1 gives the length of dives in five-second intervals as percentages of the total of 44. The mean dive of 46.6 seconds compares with Olson & Marshall (1952), who



Table 1. Length of dives in five-second intervals of Great Northern Diver *Gavia immer* as percentage of total of 44 dives, Mochrum Loch, Galloway, 1977

Mean of 44 dives: 46.6 seconds (standard deviation ± 7.02)

Length of dive (secs.)	No. of dives	% of total
30-35	3	6.9
36-40	5	11.4
41-45	11	25.0
46-50	11	25.0
51-55	10	22.7
56-60	2	4.5
over 60	2	4.5

recorded an average of 43 seconds, and with Stewart (1967), who timed eight dives on the Alaskan coast ranging from 26 to 61 seconds (mean 52.1 ± 4.6 seconds); but it differs from the mean of 21 seconds obtained by Carter (1976) at Chew Valley Lake, Avon, while Kinnear (1978) timed the median dive of two Great Northern Divers on the sea as three to four times longer than Carter's.

I did not time the length on the surface between dives, but during these breaks the diver sometimes dipped its bill in the water, frequently shook its head, or stretched its wings. It was not seen to bring prey to the surface, but two Great Black-backed Gulls *Larus marinus* once swooped on it as it surfaced; no other behaviour indicating a successful dive was noted.

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Squacco Heron possibly using insects as bait On 1st June 1977, I observed a vagrant adult Squacco Heron *Ardeola ralloides* at a small reservoir adjacent to the airfield at Weston-super-Mare, Avon (*Brit. Birds* 71: 489). The heron was clearly visible at only 30 m range as it hunted from the thin strip of emergent vegetation, mostly common reeds *Phragmites communis*, along the steep bank of the pool; I watched it in bright evening sun and after sunset, from 19.00 to 21.00 GMT.

From about 19.40 hours, I watched it hunting, and noticed that it often jabbed its bill at insects. If caught, the insect was dipped in the water and, I presumed, ingested. By about 20.00 hours, the air was still and the water surface was like a mirror, reflecting the dark background behind the heron. During 20 minutes, from 20.30 to 20.50 hours, I saw the heron jab and catch 18 flying or settled insects. Immediately afterwards, each one was placed carefully on the surface of the water and then the area was watched, or 'hunted', for a while. On 16 of these occasions, I could see the insects quite clearly on the surface as they stood out against the dark reflected background. On the other two occasions, I could not actually see an insect, but the actions of the heron were as if it had one. Sometimes, it apparently had some difficulty in placing the insect, and dipped its bill two or three times before the insect remained on the surface. At other times, the heron pecked at the insect immediately after placing it and then put it down again. It also did this after some of the insects had drifted a few centimetres; but mostly, so far as I could see, it let them drift right away.

This behaviour suggests that the Squacco Heron was actually attempting to lure fish—which were rising over most of the surface of the reservoir—within striking distance. It did catch one small fish during the 20-minute session, but I could not see whether the fish had actually been enticed within range. After 20.50 hours, the light was too poor to make accurate observations, but the heron apparently continued to hunt in the same manner.

There are three published records from the Nearctic of the Green Heron *Butorides virescens* baiting fish (Lovell 1957; Norris 1975; Sisson 1974) and Boswall (1977) gave details of a captive Sun Bittern *Eurypyga helias* behaving

similarly. In Africa, both the Green-backed Heron *Butorides striatus* and the Pied Kingfisher *Ceryle rudis* have been seen to bait fish (Boswall in press).

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Kentish Plovers with pale brown legs On 11th April 1979, together with several members of an ornithological tour, I saw a party of five plovers (Charadriidae) on the firm sandy beach at Agadir, Morocco. One was clearly a Ringed Plover *Charadrius hiaticula*, but the other four were very puzzling. In size and plumage (including white wing-bar in flight), they resembled first-winter or female Kentish Plovers *C. alexandrinus*, but the long legs of all four were uniformly pale brown. Since every Kentish Plover that I had seen before had had black legs, the identification books all note dark grey, blackish or black legs as a vital character of Kentish and the accompanying Ringed Plover had normally coloured orange legs, I took field notes on the plumage and structure of the strange individuals; subsequent investigation confirmed that they were Kentish. The uniformity of the leg colour on a total of four individuals (and the correct leg colour of the Ringed Plover) suggests that the aberrant coloration was not caused by adhering mud. All the other Kentish Plovers that I saw subsequently in Morocco in April 1979 were adults in breeding plumage and all had black legs (even those feeding in muddy habitats). The leg colour of waders is notoriously variable, but I have traced no other instances of variation from blackish for Kentish. This multiple observation suggests that pale brown legs may be typical of some (or even all) of those first-summer Kentish Plovers which do not acquire breeding plumage (perhaps only a small proportion).

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J. H. Marchant and A. J. Prater have commented as follows: 'We were interested to read this account of Kentish Plovers with pale brown legs. There are no published records relating to colours other than black so far as we are aware. There are, however, quite a few records of waders with unusual leg colours, leading to the (perhaps mistaken) idea that any wader can show unexpected leg colours (but at very low frequencies). The particularly surprising feature of this record is that there were four together: this could arise only from (a) a family party (unlikely in spring), (b) a breeding population of pale-legged birds (unlikely in such a relatively well-known flyway) or (c) pale legs being a standard feature of first-summer Kentish Plovers in this area (surprisingly not noted before, nor anywhere else in the species' wide range).' Eds

Marsh Sandpipers with yellowish or orange legs Having seen more than 1,200 Marsh Sandpipers *Tringa stagnatilis* during nine years at Khartoum, Sudan, my impressions are that yellowish legs are not so

infrequent for this species as the records and comments of S. J. M. Gantlett (*Brit. Birds* 71: 418) and J. V. Jensen (*Brit. Birds* 72: 230-231) suggest. In my experience, a lightening or yellowing of leg colour frequently occurs with the adoption of breeding plumage in the spring. In autumn and early winter, Marsh Sandpipers almost invariably have green legs, only the occasional individual in early autumn having yellowish-green legs. As those wintering at Khartoum moult into breeding plumage in February and March, a substantial proportion, possibly almost a half, show some lightening of the legs, to a degree varying from individual to individual. Most attain no more than a yellowish tinge to their green legs before they leave, but a few have legs which appear decidedly yellow in the field, though sometimes retaining a greenish suffusion around the joints. Significantly, I suspect, it is the latest ones on spring passage that show the greatest change, and by April leg colour is frequently yellow. The last Marsh Sandpiper that I saw, at Jebel Aulia dam, 40 km south of Khartoum, on 23rd March 1979, had legs of such a deep yellow as to appear orange in the field. It would be interesting to know more about the range of leg colour as the birds reappear at their breeding grounds. Dementiev *et al.* (1951, translated 1966, *Birds of the Soviet Union*, vol. 3, p. 213) quoted the leg colour as olive-green.

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Leg colour and calls of Spotted Sandpiper In 1976, I spent a couple of weeks in early August in Montreal, Canada, where I was able to study Spotted Sandpipers *Actitis macularia* on many occasions. I have also seen over half-a-dozen vagrants of the species in Britain, including two together on Tresco, Isles of Scilly, in mid August 1978. Most of the individuals that I have seen have shown the majority of the points set out in the various excellent identification papers which have appeared recently (*Brit. Birds* 63: 168-173; 70: 346-348). My observations in Canada and on Tresco, however, suggest that there are still two features that remain unclarified and rather confusing.

First, while the leg colour of Spotted in autumn is generally referred to as 'yellowish ochre', this is often, but not invariably, so. The Canadian individuals showed a quite bewildering variety, from greyish-olive, through various green and flesh tinges to the 'classic' bright yellow-ochre. One of the Tresco individuals showed yellow-ochre legs, but those of the other were olive-grey, with only a faint yellow tinge. These birds were all in early autumn: Spotted Sandpipers seen later in the year do almost invariably have yellowish legs, and they become a brighter yellow with time. One individual which stayed for some time on Tresco in October 1978 demonstrated this feature quite dazzlingly. Breeding adults, of course, actually have pinkish legs . . . but they also have spots! Generally, however, the leg colour of Spotted is always 'stronger' and more opaque than that of Common Sandpiper *A. hypoleucos*, which, in autumn, is usually a rather washed out 'dead straw' colour (rarely, incidentally, the olive-grey depicted in many field guides).

Secondly, there is possible confusion over calls. In Canada, I often watched and heard pairs or small parties of Spotted Sandpipers and they

frequently uttered calls that were perhaps a shade louder but were very hard to distinguish from the familiar piping of Common. They also had quite a variety of shorter calls, more reminiscent of Green Sandpiper *Tringa ochropus*, and clearly diagnostic. It is, however, usually assumed that Spotted has a totally distinctive voice. This is not so: a sandpiper uttering a call that is basically similar to Common may nevertheless be a Spotted. In fact, the Tresco Spotted Sandpipers gave a fair range of the species' vocabulary, including a Common Sandpiper-type call, though usually shorter ('peet weet weet' or even just 'peetweet') and various Green Sandpiper-type calls. I suspect that the confusing call resembling that of Common Sandpiper is more often uttered by Spotted when there are two or more present. Vagrants usually occur singly, which probably explains why this call has not been noted in Britain before, so far as I know. Indeed, single Spotted Sandpipers are much less inclined to call than are Common Sandpipers and, when they do, all they usually manage is a very quiet, undistinguished 'pit', which is, however, diagnostic.

To summarise, early autumn Spotted Sandpipers may display legs that are by no means yellow, and may utter calls very similar to Common Sandpipers. They should, however, still be positively identifiable if the other identification features, listed in previous papers, are thoroughly checked.

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Identification of two first-winter Marsh Warblers Much of the past confusion over identifying Reed *Acrocephalus scirpaceus* and Marsh Warblers *A. palustris* has diminished in recent years: the view expressed in the mid 1960s by several correspondents familiar with the songs and plumage of both species, that the problem posed by particularly mimetic Reed Warblers is minimal (*Brit. Birds* 58: 181-188, 473-478), is now generally supported. D. I. M. Wallace recently distilled current views on the subject (*Brit. Birds* 71: 122), later amplified by Françoise Dowsett-Lemaire and R. J. Dowsett (*Brit. Birds* 72: 190-191).

These contributions, however, referred mainly to adults in spring, and there is still a widespread impression (in Britain at least) that silent Marsh Warblers in autumn, especially those in first-winter plumage, are indistinguishable in the field from Reed Warblers. Hayman (1979) and Jonsson (1978), however, described clear plumage and structural differences for first-winter birds as well as for adults, and Dowsett-Lemaire & Dowsett gave plumage and structural differences which in their experience are 'reliable in the field throughout the year'.

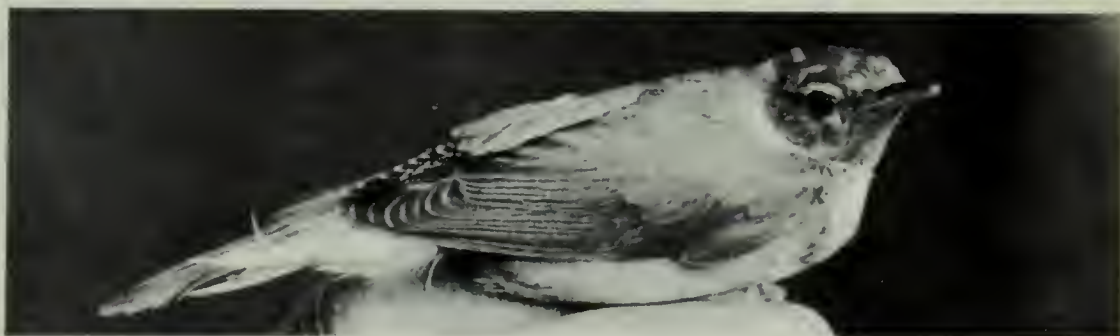
Experience of two first-winter Marsh Warblers on the Isles of Scilly in October 1979 fully supports and amplifies the distinctions which they described. In fact, these birds looked so different from first-winter Reed Warblers that the first (on St Mary's) initially suggested a pale *Hippolais* warbler, perhaps Olivaceous *H. pallida*, while the second (on St Agnes) was generally agreed to be a Blyth's Reed Warbler *A. dumetorum* by almost all of the 300 observers who studied it, until it was trapped on 16th October. It would seem useful, therefore, to summarise their main field characters,

especially those which distinguished them from Reed Warblers of the same age: they were in relatively fresh, unworn, first-winter plumage.

PLUMAGE Upperparts, wings and tail buff, slightly warmer-toned on rump and wings; subtly greyer and paler than Reed, lacking its obvious rufous tones especially on rump and wings. Tertian fringes clear-cut and pale, more contrasting than on Reed. Underparts cream or pale buff, whiter on throat and vent, lacking rufous- or brown-washed flanks of Reed. Lores and short supercilium (to just behind eye) very pale, giving *Hippolais*-like bare-faced expression from most angles (on Reed, while the pattern may be similar, there is generally less contrast because the pale areas are brown-washed, and there is usually a dark line between eye and bill across the lores). **BARE PARTS** Mouth orange-yellow. Lower mandible, and cutting edge and tip of upper mandible, yellowish or fleshy-yellow. Legs, feet and soles straw-yellow or fleshy-yellow (apparent colour depending much on lighting), with slight hint of greenish visible at close range at join of foot and tarsus (legs and feet of Reed are typically rather dark grey-green). **STRUCTURE** Crown profile more rounded (crown feathers frequently raised), and bill marginally shorter and stouter than on Reed. On closed wing, primary projection (extension of primaries beyond secondaries) long, about equal to length of exposed



107-110. First-winter Marsh Warbler *Acrocephalus palustris*, Isles of Scilly, October 1979 (Jeff Pick)



tertials. Primary tips on closed wing widely and fairly evenly spaced, not more bunched at wing-tip as on Reed. VOICE Similar to Reed: a mellow rolled 'drrrr' recalling House Sparrow *Passer domesticus*, and a short, sharp, dry 'tchre(k)'.

The two differed markedly in habitat and behaviour, giving each a remarkably different jizz. The St Mary's individual moved about rather secretively and clumsily in the upper canopy of a line of willows *Salix*, in a manner recalling a *Hippolais* warbler. The St Agnes individual spent much of the time in a hedge surrounding a weedy field, regularly flying down to take caterpillars from the weeds, then returning to the hedge, where it would immobilise its prey by thrashing it against a branch. After eating a caterpillar, it would preen or remain inactive for several minutes before repeating the process. Its normal posture while perched in the hedge was with wings drooped and tail half-cocked (and occasionally flicked). In both cases, the habitat and behaviour is probably unexceptional for any migrant *Acrocephalus* warbler, being governed by the available food supply: a Reed Warbler present for some time with the St Agnes Marsh Warbler fed and behaved in similar fashion.

These birds were thus identifiable as Marsh Warblers by much the same plumage, bare-part colour and structural criteria as used for adults in spring, except that the general upperparts coloration was browner, lacking any greenish tone. While it is possible that these Marsh Warblers were exceptionally distinctive individuals, it is also possible that the belief that first-winter Marsh and Reed Warblers are indistinguishable in the field has arisen from studies mainly of museum skins, from which it is difficult or impossible to appreciate the differences in plumage tones (through fading of specimens), bare-part colours, and structure, which are apparent—given good views and cautious appraisal of colour tones in varying light conditions—on live birds in the field.

Awareness of the field characters of first-winter Marsh Warblers, and the fact that they can look quite different from Reeds, would have avoided much of the confusion over the initial identification of these birds. In fact, in the case of the first, the suggestion that it might have been an Olivaceous Warbler was fairly readily ruled out once the rounded tail-tip and long undertail-coverts (both clearly indicating *Acrocephalus*) and the long primary projection (the latter short, about half the length of the exposed tertials, on Olivaceous) had been seen. In the second case, elimination of Blyth's Reed Warbler was less easy, primarily because the field characters of that species were not well known, but also because of the subjectivity of deciding such characters as bill length and primary-projection length in the field: many observers considered that the bill was long and the wings short (supporting identification as Blyth's Reed), views clearly contradicted by measurements taken in the hand. Most observers were estimating wing-length by trying to judge how far down the tail the wing-tip fell: in fact it is the length of the primary projection which is the critical measurement, and this is most reliably judged by comparing it with the length of the exposed tertials.

From a variety of sources, mainly Jonsson (1977) and Svensson (1975), it is possible to build the following—partly tentative—list of characters for

distinguishing Blyth's Reed Warbler from Marsh in autumn:

- (1) upperparts, wings and tail greyer than Marsh, with more uniform coloration, lacking, especially, the prominent, clear-cut, pale tertial fringes;
- (2) bill more extensively dark than Marsh, with pale area restricted to the bases of the lower mandible;
- (3) legs, feet and soles dark, not strikingly pale as on Marsh;
- (4) primary projection shorter than on Marsh (about half the length of the exposed tertials), with the tips of the longest, visible two or three primaries closely bunched at the wing-tip, not widely spaced.

Further definition of the field characters of Blyth's Reed, from observers familiar with the species, is much needed. A different set of plumage colour criteria would probably be needed for an adult *Acrocephalus* in autumn, which is likely to be highly worn and faded; structural features at least, however, should hold firm.

Measurements and wing formula of the St Agnes bird were as follows:

MEASUREMENTS Wing 69.5 mm; bill (from coverts; 3rd longest; tip of 2nd fell between skull) 14 mm, from feathers 10 mm. WING 4th and 5th; notch on 2nd fell between 6th and 7th.
FORMULA 1st 4.5 mm shorter than primary

I am most grateful to John Smith for allowing access to his farm on St Agnes, to J. A. Hobson, Jeff Pick and L. Worthington for kindly providing photographs, which have proved invaluable, and to J. H. Marchant, P. J. Marsh and W. Underwood who carried out the trapping operations and provided the biometric data.

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Juvenile House Sparrows parasitising nestling House Sparrows

Near Oxford, during 1972-74, while working on a project on ecological and physiological aspects of the House Sparrow *Passer domesticus* (Schifferli 1976), I regularly checked and watched nestboxes containing young. In the first two years, but not in the third, I obtained data suggesting that independent juveniles occasionally enter nests with young, presumably to obtain food from the visiting adults. Such intraspecific parasitism has been reported for the Starling *Sturnus vulgaris* in North America (Johnson & Cowan 1974), but not for the House Sparrow, despite intensive studies (e.g. Summers-Smith 1963, Dawson 1972), nor for any other bird species.

In 1972, 131 boxes were occupied, with a total of 204 broods; in 1973, 213 were occupied, with 315 broods. Each box was visited four or five times and on four occasions single independent young were found among the resident brood. In three additional instances, I observed female-coloured individuals, most likely juveniles, entering boxes with young. The resident females in each case were identifiable by colour-rings. In one instance, feeding was observed: the intruder entered the box and waited under the hole, where it was easily distinguished from the resident young by its fully feathered head. Whereas the parents still fed their eight-day-old young inside the box, this bird was given food by the female under the nest-hole. When the resident male was about to feed it, it left the box and he chased it away.

Four of the parasitising birds were caught in the late afternoon and weighed. Juveniles mist-netted at the same time of year and day weighed 26.5 g (standard deviation 2.13, $n = 63$) and were heavier than the parasites (24.2 g, s.d. 1.95). This suggests that the intruding birds might have been weaker, although the weight difference is statistically not significant. Three of the intruding juveniles had been ringed as nestlings. Their ages—45, 56 and 83 days—suggest that the parasites were independent of their parents. The parasitised broods were eight to 14 days old and of normal size (two to five young). At this age, the nestlings inside a dark box differ superficially little in appearance from the intruders, which were, however, probably stronger than the nestlings and therefore at an advantage when competing with them for food. Since the parents fed any young inside the nest, it seems unlikely that newcomers would have been recognised. They accepted any chicks which I added, and even newly-hatched young in exchange for eggs one to three days after clutch-completion.

The advantage of entering occupied boxes might be twofold. First, it would reduce heat loss, especially during the night, and thus save energy. Secondly, the parasites might gain food from the visiting adults. The risk of being eaten by a predator, along with the foster-siblings, seems negligible, as there is no record of nest predation in my study area (Seel 1968, Dawson 1972, personal observations).

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Fifty years ago . . .

'The weather of 1929 was remarkable for the hard frost of February, which was the coldest month since 1895, the prolonged drought throughout the spring, summer and early autumn, and the frequent severe gales which occurred during the last two months of the year. Almost continuous frost prevailed during the last half of January and the first week of February, but it was not until February 11th that the period of intense cold set in which lasted, with only a brief respite between February 20th and 25th, until March 7th . . . Although most birds suffered considerably, and there was a heavy mortality amongst certain species, this spell of cold, though extremely severe, proved on the whole much less disastrous to bird life than the more prolonged winter of 1916-17. Amongst Passerine birds many Redwings and Song-Thrushes, and a few Blackbirds were picked up dead, while Fieldfares, as is usually the case in very hard weather, appeared to move on. Bearded Tits undoubtedly suffered . . . though fortunately to nothing like the same extent as in 1917. No decrease in the number of Tree-Creepers or Goldcrests appears to have been noticed. Bitterns were starved out, the whole of the broads and rivers being frozen over, and nine or ten were picked up dead during the month. Herons also appear to have been hard put to it . . . Many starved Moorhens were picked up dead through the Broad's district, while thousands of Black-headed Gulls visited the gardens in Norwich daily to be fed.

'Along the coast-line the salt marshes were frozen over, and the tidal muds froze as the tide ebbed. Waders suffered severely, and Mr. M. C. W. Dilke, who was wild-fowling down the

Wash, told me that he saw numbers of dead and dying Dunlin along the shore-line, while Redshanks were so weak that they could scarcely fly. Wild-fowlers reaped a rich harvest, though many of the birds were in such poor condition as to be hardly worth keeping.' From 'Ornithological report for Norfolk for 1929. By B. B. Rivière, FRCS, MBOU' (*Brit. Birds* 23: 282-283, April 1930)

Letters

Diving times and their interpretation Dewar's findings (1924, *The Bird as a Diver*), which are frequently both overlooked and misinterpreted, clearly established that birds diving to feed on the bottom have *average* dive times closely correlated to the *average* depth of the water in which they are feeding. This can be interpreted by assuming that they spend about ten seconds per dive exploring the bottom and about five seconds to ascend and descend by 1 m, but many papers contrasting the dive times of a species in different sites and habitats fail to record the average depth of the water in which they were made. Feeding dives are characteristically separated into bouts of 25 to 40 dives, separated by intervals which average a half to a third the length of the average dives (see Dewar). Between bouts, birds, especially grebes (Podicipedidae), usually rest for one to ten minutes, frequently preening. Even within a single bout of dives, an individual may move across a bottom profile of greatly varying depths and its dive times will change accordingly; and, during a bout in water of uniform depth, if a bird moves into and out of weed beds (which may not be obvious to the observer), its diving behaviour may vary significantly (personal observations). The frequency-distributions, both of dives and of intervals, are usually skewed and of different variances and cannot, therefore, be compared using an ordinary student's 't' test.

It would seem that it is worth recording the dive times of birds only under rigorously pre-chosen circumstances. Without this major factor of water depth, we stand no chance of assessing the effects of other habitat variables (in coastal sites, the state of the tide must also be recorded precisely). Further, it is rarely worth while to contrast the feeding dives of individuals, unless based on exceptionally long series of observations in uniform habitat, since we expect dives made in different habitats and circumstances to vary. Comparisons between species are even more tenuous: different species often occur on different lakes, feed over different zones of the coast and, even if they feed in the same region of a lake, may do so predominantly in different aquatic habitats (P. J. Bacon, 1974, *Medd. Tåkerns Fältstation* 10: 46-53). One obvious situation for study is the dive times of individuals within a group feeding simultaneously in uniform habitat, but unfortunately it is normally impossible to identify individuals and hence contrast the feeding patterns of birds within the group. A final but vital point is that, while the time a diving bird spends feeding can be easily recorded, the other side of the equation—its benefit from the amount of food it catches—is rarely measurable.

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Migrating Little Gulls in the Netherlands In their paper on Little Gulls *Larus minutus* (*Brit. Birds* 71: 563-582), C. D. Hutchinson and B. Neath mentioned a regular passage through the North Sea. Since no documentation from the Netherlands was available to them, it seems worth giving a short review of the observed spring and autumn migration along the Dutch west coast. From 1974 onwards, observations have been made almost daily at one or more coastal sites. The number of observation hours increased from 1,564 in 1974 to 4,500 in 1978. Between March and November, it is not infrequent for observations to be made all day long. From the North Sea coast from the Waddenzee islands, however, there are many fewer comparable data on seabird movements. This letter, therefore, is concerned mainly with the coasts of Noord Holland and Zuid Holland.

In summer and winter, only small numbers of Little Gulls are seen. In summer, little more than half are adults, whereas in winter practically all are in adult plumage. Main coastal passage is in spring and autumn (see tables 1 and 2). In spring, more than 95% head north. In all years, the strongest passage is concentrated in a period of about ten days, and the complete passage is restricted mainly to the period between mid April and mid May. In the first two weeks of this period, most are in adult plumage, with fewer in second-winter plumage; later, the proportion in first-winter plumage increases, to reach 60-80%. About 95% during spring passage are adults or second-winters. Maximum numbers flying north have been 1,039 on 6th May 1974; 4,008 during 30th April to 2nd May 1976; 1,517 on 2nd May 1978; and 1,303 on 3rd May 1978.

Table 1. Little Gulls *Larus minutus* passing north along west coast of the Netherlands during 16th April to 15th May, 1974-79

	Hours of observation	Number counted	Average per hour
1974	155	1,711	30.6
1975	236½	1,569	6.6
1976	322½	7,216	22.5
1977	422	1,873	4.4
1978	603	9,901	16.4
1979	303	5,571	18.4

Table 2. Little Gulls *Larus minutus* passing south along west coast of the Netherlands during 1st October to 30th November, 1974-78

	Hours of observation	Number counted	Average per hour
1974	404½	453	1.1
1975	425	1,470	3.5
1976	528	10,774	20.4
1977	664	8,625	13.0
1978	667	2,602	3.9

In autumn, 80-85% of all observed Little Gulls head south. Passage is less concentrated than in spring and takes place mainly in October and November. Adults comprise about 80-90%. Although the total numbers are not so high as in spring, the passage still concerns thousands. Maximum numbers seen flying south at any one observation point in one day have been 1,411 on 20th October 1976; 1,638 on 21st October 1976; 1,208 on 6th November 1976; and 2,238 on 12th November 1977.

In spring, as well as in autumn, Little Gulls may pass at high speed, but passage is often very slow, with the gulls halting from time to time to forage in small groups. The numbers passing along the west coast of the Netherlands in spring and in autumn appear to be greater than those at other observation points on the North Sea coasts.

KEES WOUTERSEN

Jaagkade 3, Schoorl, Netherlands

Identification of Red-rumped Swallow I was sorry to see the recent sketch of the Red-rumped Swallow *Hirundo daurica* (*Brit. Birds* 72: 401), since it perpetuated an omission from many of the descriptions in field-guides and elsewhere.

One of the most distinctive characteristics of the species is the black or very dark undertail-coverts, which this sketch failed to show. This feature is much more striking than the pale rump, and combines with the heavy build and face pattern (which gives the Red-rumped Swallow a small-headed appearance) to produce an almost falcon-like jizz, unlike the Swallow *H. rustica* which looks streamlined, with a large head.

W. G. HARVEY

2 Little Bredlands, Bredlands Lane, Westbere, Canterbury, Kent CT20HD

Nocturnal singing by Cetti's Warblers The records of continuous nocturnal singing by Cetti's Warblers *Cettia cetti* (*Brit Birds* 72: 184-185) raise the possibility that this habit is restricted to unmated males. It could, therefore, be a useful way of determining whether a territorial individual is paired.

During 1977-79, I have spent many hours at night in the Middle Stour Valley, Kent, with its large population (60 to 70 territories in each year) of Cetti's Warblers. I have never heard night singing, and daylight observations have suggested that most, and probably all, of this core population is paired.

The Cetti's Warblers at Elmstone in Kent and Minsmere in Suffolk were known to be alone; the record from Surlingham in Norfolk is not necessarily anomalous, since it appears that song was heard only at dusk. Many Cetti's Warblers do sing more or less continuously then, and will go on for a short while into darkness, but true nocturnal singing, as described from other sites, continues into the early hours.

Nocturnal singing seems to be of rare occurrence, so is worth noting, particularly since it may give some indication of the nuptial status of the singer.

W. G. HARVEY

2 Little Bredlands, Bredlands Lane, Westbere, Canterbury, Kent CT20HD

Identification of eastern Yellow-browed Warblers In the recent reports and discussion of Yellow-browed Warblers *Phylloscopus inornatus* showing characters of the race *humei* (*Brit. Birds* 71: 464-465; 72: 124-125, 130, 484-485, 485), I am surprised to find the colour of the bill neglected. In Mongolia, I have seen *humei* breeding in the Hangai Mountains in June, when it appears 'washed-out', greyish above (Williamson's (1974) 'mealy' seems a good fit), showing a single wing-bar (on the greater coverts) and lacking whitish tips to tertials. In mid August, when it is probably in very fresh dress, it has two wing-bars and pale tips to tertials, as does the race

inornatus, but retains its mealy ground colour. A common feature of *humei* in both June and August, and characteristic of it in contrast to *P. i. inornatus*, is its blackish bill. At normal ranges, the whole bill looks blackish or very dark grey-brown; only at very close range can a paler, dark horn-flesh base to the lower mandible be discerned, extending about one-third of the length of the bill, not more. This appears to be a good distinguishing feature not only from *P. i. inornatus*, but also from Greenish Warbler *P. trochiloides*, dull individuals of which may resemble *humei* in other ways, Greenish having a horn-coloured bill except for the basal half of the lower mandible, which is flesh-orange.

A. R. KITSON

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REFERENCE

WILLIAMSON, K. 1974. *Identification for Ringers, 2. The Genus Phylloscopus*. BTO Field Guide. Tring.

Nightjar habitats and status in Sussex I read with interest the paper by Rob Berry (*Brit. Birds* 72: 207-218) on the habitats and breeding of Nightjars *Caprimulgus europaeus* in East Anglia. In recent years, Sussex, like Suffolk and Norfolk, has been regarded as a stronghold of the species (Parslow 1973), so the latest work there may be of more than local interest.

At the time of the last national enquiry, in 1957-58, Stafford (1962) found no evidence of a decline in Sussex over the previous ten years. More recently, I have endeavoured, with the support of the Sussex Ornithological Society, to reassess the status of the species in Sussex. A census was undertaken during 1967-69 (for convenience, referred to hereafter as 1968, since that was the year of best coverage). Information was collected on an informal basis for a further seven years and this was followed by a full census in 1977, organised by myself and J. W. Houghton, and involving 86 other observers. The results of this census have been reported elsewhere (Hughes *et al.* 1978).

In 1968, Nightjars were reported from 125 sites, with a very marked correlation with sandy or chalk soils. Downland forestry plantations, greensand heaths and associated forestry, and the forest ridges of northern Sussex have emerged as the most important breeding areas (Shrubb 1978). In 1977, habitat details were documented for 177 territories and, while these were found to be varied, 98 (55%) territories were in temporary habitats in the form of recently felled areas and plantations as follows:

Recently felled areas 22 (12%); coniferous plantations (<1 m 12, <2 m 18, <3 m 18, >3 m 7, unknown height 8) 63 (36%); pine *Pinus*/beech *Fagus* plantations 9 (5%); beech plantations 4 (2%); coppice (mainly sweet chestnut *Castanea sativa*) 17 (10%); heathland with scattered trees 39 (22%); silver birch *Betula* woodland/scrub with bracken *Pteridium* 8 (4%); open beech, oak *Quercus* and mixed woodland and woodland edge 7 (4%); open mature pine woodland 3 (2%); old sandpit with scrub silver birch 3 (2%); railway embankment 1 (<1%); open chalk downland 1 (<1%).

Of the 125 known sites in Sussex, 92 were visited in 1968 and in 1977, but only 20 held territories in both years. In 1968 and 1977, these accounted for 50% and 49% of the total populations respectively. In 1977, 189 territories were found at 68 sites, but 49 of the sites held less than three territories. Of known sites, 21 were not used in either 1968 or 1977.

Thus, in Sussex, the Nightjar is widely, albeit thinly distributed, and utilises a wide variety of habitats. Its use of some sites may be irregular or

shortlived, even when the habitat appears unchanged. These factors, together with the annual fluctuations in numbers, make an accurate assessment of population changes impossible. Nevertheless, the general consensus is that, over the last ten years, in East Sussex there has been a definite decline, whereas in West Sussex the situation is unclear, but a decline is possible.

Experience in Sussex suggests that a comprehensive census of the species on a national scale would be extremely difficult to perform and the results would be of doubtful value. Prolonged annual monitoring of selected sites, with minimal habitat change, would appear to be logistically more feasible and more likely to give meaningful information on population trends.

S. W. M. HUGHES

6 West Way, Slinfold, Horsham, West Sussex

REFERENCES

- HUGHES, S. W. M., HOUGHTON, J. W., & BLAKE, F. W. 1978. The breeding distribution and status of the Nightjar in East and West Sussex. *Sussex Bird Report* (1977): 66-73.
 PARSLow, J. 1973. *Breeding Birds of Britain and Ireland*. Berkhamsted.
 SHRUBB, M. 1978. *The Birds of Sussex*. London & Chichester.
 STAFFORD, J. 1962. Nightjar enquiry, 1957-1958. *Bird Study* 9: 104-115.

A national census of this species is being planned by the BTO, under the guidance of a working group consisting of Dr James Cadbury, David Glue, Frank Gribble and Dr J. T. R. Sharrock. Dr Cadbury has commented as follows on Mr Hughes's letter: 'The Nightjar is particularly associated with woodland edges and clearings where young trees are invading open ground, as a result of natural regeneration or planting. As a transitory phase in the heathland-to-woodland succession, the habitat is dynamic. A study restricted to sites which show little habitat change would probably not be representative of more than a minority of the population in Britain. Ideally, a national survey or census of this species should be carried out in association with surveillance over a number of years of Nightjar populations in selected *areas* (rather than specific sites), where it might be possible to account for distribution adjustments in relation to habitat changes. The BTO expects to meet some problems in attempting a national census, but, with the knowledge gained from studies carried out by S. W. M. Hughes, Rob Berry and others, we should be better prepared than in 1957-58.' EDS

In praise of birdwatchers I should like to thank Mr Bryan Bland, Mr Peter Grant and their friends who, during October 1979, when a rare bird was sighted on my farm, organised the birdwatchers into groups so that they could go into my fields and see this bird. I understand that about 300 birdwatchers were able to study this bird, without any damage being done to walls, hedges or ground.

I should also like to thank all those responsible for the present which I received. Yes, my wife and I will think of you as we are having a 'glass' during the winter nights.

We look forward to seeing you all again in spring and autumn 1980.

JOHN SMITH

Lower Town, St Agnes, Isles of Scilly

We welcome Mr Smith's letter. It reflects the responsible approach of birdwatchers at the majority of rare bird venues, and contrasts with the few unwelcome incidents which unfortunately—but understandably—tend to attract a disproportionate amount of attention. Clearly, the well-being of the bird, the attitude of the local landowners, and the capacity of the terrain to cope with an influx of observers should all be carefully considered before the

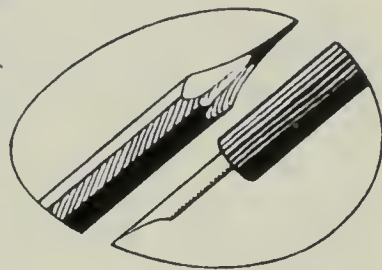
presence of a rarity is made widely known. If the decision is taken to spread the word, it is essential that the message should give clear instructions which will result in the minimum disturbance to the bird, the local people, and the habitat. Visitors who fail to follow this advice should rightly attract the wrath of the responsible majority. Occasionally, special arrangements may need to be made, and, in the case referred to by Mr Smith, these were quite exceptional: permission had been given for 20 people at a time to go on his land to see the bird, so a simple ticket system was devised enabling groups of 20 to visit the site on a continuous 15-minute 'shift' basis. Everyone gladly complied with the plan, and all obtained excellent views. The fact that the bird proved to be a Marsh Warbler *Acrocephalus palustris*, not a Blyth's Reed Warbler *A. dumetorum* as was originally believed (see pages 186-189), is academic. Eds

Announcements

Directory of foreign ornithological tours As a service to subscribers, we shall, in an autumn 1980 issue, be publishing a short directory of 1981 foreign bird tours. Any travel firms which wish to have their tours considered for inclusion in this directory should send details of countries and dates of departure to Mrs S. D. Cobban, Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3NJ.

'Bird Illustrator of the Year' and 'The Richard Richardson Award'

The closing date for these competitions is 31st May. Full details of the rules appeared in January (*Brit. Birds* 73: 44-45). We hope that the number of entries will be even higher than last year, especially from artists aged under 21. As well as the four prize-winners' work, drawings by 30 or so other entrants will be selected for display at a London press reception.



Western Palearctic rarities committees To help ornithologists who see rarities outside their own countries, we are publishing the secretarial addresses of rarities committees which operate in the western Palearctic. The value of rarities committees as focal points for identification research and for maintaining national rarity records is obvious: further gradual expansion of the network to cover eventually most of the western Palearctic would be welcome. The help of G. J. Oreel in compiling the list is gratefully acknowledged. We shall welcome additions, corrections and updating amendments to this list.

BELGIUM (Flanders)	P. Herroelen, Van Asschestraat 33, 1910 Melsbroek
BELGIUM (Wallonia)	Jean Tricot, rue Haut 40, 1330 Rixensart
DENMARK	Per Schiermacher Hansen, Klintholm Havnevej 54, 4791 Borre
FINLAND	Karno Mikkola, Zoological Museum, P. Rautatiekatu 13, SF-00100 Helsinki 10
GERMAN FEDERAL REPUBLIC	Alistair Hill, Albrecht-Haushofer-Strasse 10, 3200 Hildesheim

GREAT BRITAIN

M. J. Rogers, 195 Vicarage Road, Sunbury-on-Thames, Middlesex TW16 7TP, England

IRELAND

J. Fitzharris, 35 St John's Park, Clondalkin, Co. Dublin, Republic of Ireland

NETHERLANDS

C. J. G. Scharringa, Trompenburg 15, 1852 CB, Heiloo

NORWAY

Jan Michaelson, Zoological Museum, Sars gt 1, Oslo 5

SWEDEN

Jan Ohlsson, Mälby, 14900 Nynäshamn

SWITZERLAND

Raffael Winkler, Schweizerische Vogelwarte-Sempach, 6204 Sempach

Requests

Glossy Ibises in Britain and Ireland Information is required of any unpublished occurrences of Glossy Ibis *Plegadis falcinellus*, especially records since 1970, including details of observations on aerial, feeding, resting and roosting behaviour, calls, size, plumage, habitat preference, times when seen, etc. Observations from abroad will also be welcomed, particularly those concerning east and west European feeding-, breeding- and roosting-sites. Information should be sent to P. J. Mountford, Reedlings, Stodmarsh, Canterbury, Kent CT3 4BA.

Goshawks in Britain A forthcoming paper in *British Birds* will deal with the status and factors affecting breeding success of Goshawks *Accipiter gentilis* in Britain. Observers of Goshawks on their British breeding grounds are invited to contribute information for possible inclusion. Names of observers will not be published, since these could often give a clue to the birds' locations. Please write to Dr M. Marquiss, Bellholm Bungalow, Kirkmahoe, Dumfries DG1 1SY.

Complementary to the work being carried out by Dr M. Marquiss, data are being collected on Goshawk breeding ecology in central Britain, particularly information on displays. Observers of Goshawks in that area are invited to send information to David Herringshaw, 64 Butterthwaite Road, Sheffield S5 0AU.

Nightingale Survey Under the guidance of a working group consisting of Peter G. Davis, J. H. Marchant, Dr Norman Pratt and Dr J. T. R. Sharrock, the BTO is organising a census of Nightingales *Luscinia megarhynchos* in Britain in 1980, with fieldwork concentrated during 1st-31st May. Anyone willing to help who has not already contacted their local BTO representative should write at once to Nightingale Survey, BTO, Beech Grove, Tring, Hertfordshire HP23 5NR.

Singing Marsh Warblers outside Worcestershire There is evidence that the species mimicked in the songs of individual Marsh Warblers *Acrocephalus palustris* reflect both their European natal and their African wintering areas (see Françoise Dowsett-Lemaire, 1979, *Ibis* 121: 453-468). It is hoped to establish, by analysis of sound-recordings, whether the Marsh Warblers breeding at scattered sites in England derive from the Continent or represent an expansion from the main Worcestershire area. This investigation is supported by the Rare Breeding Birds Panel. Anyone finding a singing male on territory in June-July 1980 is asked to report details *immediately* to Harry Green, Windy Ridge, Little Comberton, Pershore, Worcestershire; telephone: 038674-377 (home); 0905-25238 (work).

Greater Manchester and Cheshire breeding bird surveys A 2-km square (tetrad) breeding bird survey has now been organised for the Greater Manchester County (GMC), to be carried out concurrently with that already in progress in Cheshire and the Wirral (see

'News and comment', *Brit. Birds* 72: 134). Both surveys are due to finish after the 1983 breeding season. The new atlas codes (see 'Announcements', *Brit. Birds* 72: 440-441) have been adopted from 1980 onwards. Anyone wishing to help with either survey, or visiting either county during the breeding survey and able to provide breeding records, should contact the relevant organiser: *GMC* Phillip Holland, 43 Thornhill Road, Heaton Mersey, Stockport SK4 3HL (tel. 061-442-9303); *Cheshire* Dennis Elphick, 28 Coniston Drive, Holmes Chapel, Crewe, Cheshire CW4 7LA (tel. 0477-33906).

News and comment

Peter Conder and Mike Everett

Bird dealer jailed At Leicester Crown Court on 28th January 1980, Gordon Cooke of Gordon Cooke Exports was sent to prison on concurrent six-month and three-month sentences and fined £200 after pleading guilty to nine charges under Section 1(1)(a) of the Endangered Species (Import and Export) Act 1976, and two charges of evasion of VAT. The birds being illegally imported and exported (or both) not only included several species subject to normal licensing control under the Act but also three List A (particularly rare and specially controlled) birds: Queen of Bavaria's Conure *Aratinga guaruba*, Spix's Macaw *Cyanopsitta spixii* and Hooded Parakeet *Psephotus chrysopterygius*. The case showed clearly enough that the lucrative trade in rare and exotic species still gives plenty of cause for concern. Quite apart from the conservation considerations, it was disturbing to see how easily the licensing system can be abused by deliberately misnaming the species involved on the import and export licences and how inadequate are the present arrangements for identifying many of the foreign species passing through British ports of entry: there are clearly major loopholes here in the enforcement of what is basically a sound piece of legislation. In fact, the Cooke case, which was brought to a successful conclusion by HM Customs and Excise, arose only after the Royal Canadian Mounted Police discovered correspondence from him while investigating (and subsequently prosecuting) a Canadian dealer. . . which gives more food for thought.

Birds of Tunisia Our attention has been drawn to the *Birds of Tunisia* by Peter Thomsen and Peder Jacobsen (available, from the SOC Bird Bookshop, 21 Regent Terrace, Edinburgh EH7 5BT, for £10.50). This is an annotated checklist with dis-

tribution maps and also a 'where to go' section. The authors propose to update the list periodically and are also interested in the possibilities of an annual report on birds in Tunisia: full details of how to help are given on a slip inside the book.

Bustards in decline Paul Goriup of the Great Bustard Trust and the ICBP Bustard Group attended a symposium on the conservation of the Great Bustard *Otis tarda* held in October 1979 in Siemianice, Poland. It was reported that the 1978/79 winter had further reduced the Polish population (see 'News and comment', 71: 425) to a mere 25 birds, while in the German Democratic Republic (DDR) the population fell from 800 to 500 as birds sought refuge from the cold in Western Europe. Some of these may, by now, have returned; but bad weather is always bad news for these northerly bustards and, in the 1969/70 winter, 10% of those which moved perished (*J. Om.* 112: 138-157). Some good news from the symposium is that Dr Max Dornbusch of the Steckby Biological Station in the DDR has successfully developed techniques of rearing and releasing chicks from threatened or deserted wild-laid clutches. This had widely been thought impracticable because of imprinting, but Dr Dornbusch has evidence that some at least of his females have subsequently bred. In just five years, he has released a remarkable total of 188 birds. They were ringed and some were seen in Western Europe last winter and noted for their tameness (e.g. *Dutch Birding* 1: 54-55). The legs of any vagrants to Britain should therefore be scrutinised carefully. A recent issue of the bulletin of the Moscow naturalists' society contains an article by Y. V. Kostin entitled 'Is the Little Bustard doomed?'. The future of the species certainly



111 & 112. Male Little Bustard *Tetrax tetrax*, Portugal, April 1977 (N. J. Collar)

looks bleak. The news that the once massive numbers in the Crimea have dwindled to 20-30 pairs, with the surmise that the decline has been equally steep elsewhere in the USSR, means that only in the Iberian peninsula can we entertain hopes for its long-term survival. The species appears to be extinct in Eastern Europe and non-Soviet Asia; only small numbers linger in Italy and Sardinia; the French population is considered by Michel Metais of the Ligue pour la Protection des Oiseaux to be doomed by the year 2000; and those in North Africa have fared so badly that only in Morocco do remnant groups continue to breed. Numbers have always been so high in favourable areas of Spain and Portugal that a decline may have gone unnoticed for years, so diligent research is now urgently needed. Copies of a translation of Kostin's paper, by M. G. Wilson, may be obtained from Dr N. J. Collar, Chairman ICBP Bustard Group, Edward Grey Institute of Field Ornithology, Department of Zoology, South Parks Road,

Oxford OX1 3PS (send sae). Travellers to North Africa and the Middle East are urged to submit all bustard records to that address. (Contributed by N. J. Collar).

Sussex initiative Wearing his Sussex Ornithological Society rather than his 'Comptroller of Rare Birds' hat, Mike Rogers recently showed us an intriguing SOS document entitled 'Identification, note-taking and reporting', which he described as an attempt to encourage Sussex birders to provide the 'right sort of information in the most usable form'. With quite unnecessary humility, he wondered if it might be of interest to other organisations and observers in other counties: we feel it should be, since it not only provides some of the best guidelines we have seen recently on how to keep useful notes from a fact-gathering and recording point of view, but also contains an excellent section on identifying birds and how to organise written notes and field descriptions of unfamiliar species. County recorders ought to have a look at this document, and individual birdwatchers would learn a lot from it too. Copies are available (25p each, post free) from J. E. Trowell, 298 Harold Road, Hastings, East Sussex TN35 5NF.

Parrot thrashing We were intrigued to read (in *Oryx*, November 1979) the latest news of the endangered Puerto Rican Parrot *Amazona vittata*. One of the main problems facing the tiny remnant population was nest-site competition from Pearly-eyed Thrashers *Margarops fuscatus*: the thrashers drove the parrots from their nesting holes. The US Fish and Wildlife Service, however, has achieved considerable success in providing alternative homes for the thrashers, which have shown a marked preference for nestboxes set up within 20m of parrots' nests; with their strongly developed territorial behaviour, the neighbouring thrashers have helped the parrots, by driving away 'intruding' thrashers! All this aided an increase in the parrots' wild population from 13 in 1975 to 28 in 1978. Both species suffer from warble-fly infestation: research on thrasher chicks showed that this can be controlled using Dermatron and Pyrethin, and, when tried on the parrots, this treatment proved equally effective. For some time, attempts to breed Puerto Rican Parrots in captivity have been thwarted by the impossibility of sexing the birds, but new techniques have solved this problem too and an artificial insemination programme is now under way.

European Peregrine news Some encouraging news has come from Finland, where the population of Peregrines *Falco peregrinus* fell from perhaps 1,000 pairs in the 'pre-toxic era' to only 20 in 1975; in 1978, there were 27 breeding pairs, plus two non-breeding pairs and singles in seven other sites, and 39 young fledged successfully (*Oryx*, November 1979). The situation is still critical in Sweden, though, where nine pairs reared 12 young in 1979; the Swedish Society for the Conservation of Nature's captive-breeding programme notched up its first success last year, with its captive pair of Finnish birds rearing a youngster for the first time (*Sveriges Natur* 5/79). In the German Federal Republic, recently-released news is the best we have heard from Europe for a long time. We are grateful to Peter Robinson for the following details: the Peregrine Study Group of the Deutsche Bund für Vogelschutz (DBV) reports a good recovery from a typical toxics-era population crash. Apart from reports of two or three pairs seen at former breeding sites in central Germany, the Peregrine seems to have been absent north of the River

Main since about 1973, but in 1979 there were estimated to be 50 pairs in the south, with 40 in Baden-Württemberg and ten in Bavaria. In Baden-Württemberg, 47 young were reared in 1978 (the most since 1960) and 43 in 1979. The fact that some of the 40 pairs include sub-adults at old breeding sites bodes well for the future. German Peregrines face much the same sort of disturbance threats as their British cousins (one nest was robbed of eggs in 1979, for example), but tick infestation is also a serious and as yet unsolved problem and martens have proved to be versatile and ingenious nest predators. The latter have been discouraged by suitably counter ingenious methods, which include transmitting high-pitched, intermittent signals, placing metal baffles across ledges, and even splashing diesel oil—which the animals particularly dislike—along potential routes to eyries. In extreme cases, men and machinery have been employed in the winter months to create wholly new nest-ledges in some areas, which the falcons have readily accepted.

Opinions expressed in this feature are not necessarily those of the editors of British Birds

Recent reports

K. Allsopp and R. A. Hume

These are largely unchecked reports, not authenticated records

This report covers January and a few early February records; except where otherwise stated, all dates refer to January.

The weather conditions in January, although unpleasant, were not severe enough to cause any extensive hard-weather movements. In the second week, pressure remained high over to the northeast, threatening to bring Siberian conditions from northern Europe, but these did not develop, the coldest days coming after the winds turned northerly on 14th and 26th. The rest of the period was influenced by milder westerly air. Temperatures in the Baltic Sea area were never unusually low, so that little movement could be expected from birds wintering there.

Wildfowl

The **White-fronted Geese** *Anser albifrons* at Slimbridge (Gloucestershire) totalled 1,800

during the month (and the two **Lesser White-fronted Geese** *A. erythropus* remained with them), while, in Ireland, the flock on the Wexford Slobbs reached 5,500, accompanied by two **Snow Geese** *A. caerulescens*. Also of note were the flock of **Greylag Geese** *A. anser* in the Eden Valley (Cumbria), estimated at 2,300 in late December, and, in Norfolk, the flocks of **Bean Geese** *A. fabalis* in the Yare Valley (140) and at Holkham (40).

The Southernness (Dumfries & Galloway) **Surf Scoter** *Melanitta perspicillata* was still present, but, surprisingly, another turned up at Minsmere (Suffolk) on 2nd February. Further wintering **Ring-necked Ducks** *Aythya collaris* were found at Abergavenny (Gwent) and at Tophill Low Reservoir (North Humberside). **Ferruginous Ducks** *A. nyroca*, never very common, were reported from Harlestone (Suffolk) on 12th, Arundel (West Sussex) on 18th and Chapel Pits (Lincolnshire) on 27th. Eye Brook Reservoir



(Leicestershire) is often visited by **Smews** *Mergus albellus*, usually 'red-heads', but a splendid male was found there on 3rd February. Radipole Lake (Dorset) became a centre of attraction on 26th, when a **Pied-billed Grebe** *Podilymbus podiceps* was discovered: this often secretive bird will find plenty of opportunity there to disappear.

Seabirds

As mentioned in our December 1979 report (73: 165), **Glaucous Gulls** *Larus hyperboreus* were more numerous than usual: a total of 44 was reported this month, 22 of them on 19th and 20th along the Yorkshire coast, and a further five on Tees-side (Cleveland). Most of the rest were on Midland reservoirs, with fours at Draycote Reservoir (Warwickshire) and Chasewater (Staffordshire) on 19th, and twos at Bartley Reservoir (West Midlands) and Ogston Reservoir (Derbyshire) also on 19th. An **Iceland Gull** *L. glaucoideus* was also present at the last locality at the same time, and another appeared at Westport Lake (Staffordshire) in early January. Perhaps not surprising after this influx of northern gulls was a further record of an **Ivory Gull** *Pagophila eburnea*, at Chesil Beach (Dorset) from 26th. With the influx of so many keen eyes, five **Mediterranean Gulls** *L. melanocephalus* and a **Little Gull** *L. minutus* were also found in the same area. Skuas sometimes appear in winter, and a **Pomarine Skua**

inland at Theale Gravel-pits (Berkshire) on 19th was a very rare event, especially outside the migration period. Also of rarity value were a **Common Tern** *Sterna hirundo* on 5th at Bangor (Co. Down), and two **Black Guillemots** *Cephus grylle*, at Cley (Norfolk) and at Walberswick on 8th.

Birds of prey

Rough-legged Buzzards *Buteo lagopus* have been fairly scarce this winter, but two were reported at Gouthwaite Reservoir (North Yorkshire) on 27th, two in the Brecks (Norfolk) and one at Kirkby Stephen (Cumbria) on 30th December. Two **Hen Harriers** *Circus cyaneus* arrived off the sea at Filey Brigg (North Yorkshire) on 2nd February, with the advent of colder weather to northern Europe.

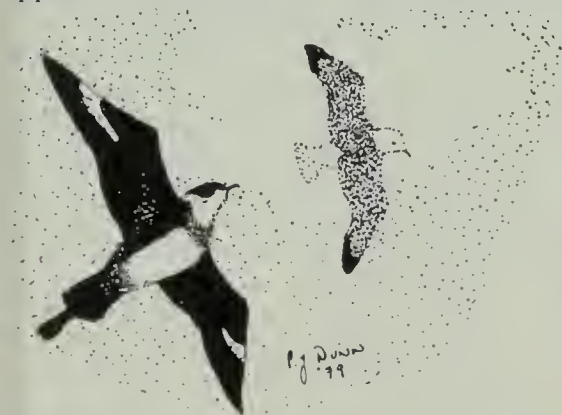
Wintering passerines

Perhaps 'overlooked' is the true wintering status of the **Lapland Bunting** *Calcarus*



lapponicus. This winter, a flock of 70 has been present on farmland near Redcar (Cleveland) and there have been regular parties at Spurn Point (Humberside). **Firecrests** *Regulus ignicapillus* were present in small numbers at Walberswick and in the Portland (Dorset) area, where also quite a few **Chiffchaffs** *Phylloscopus collybita* have been found. Flocks of **Waxwings** *Bombycilla garrulus* have been very scarce: the only report was of 20 at Guisborough (Cleveland).

Finally, there was a **Quail** *Coturnix coturnix* at Portland Bill on 12th; a **Crane** *Grus grus* on Flockburgh Marshes (Cumbria) remained into the new year, as did the **Greater Sand Plover** *Charadrius leschenaultii* at Chew Valley Lake (Avon).



Stercorarius pomarinus on the coast at Walberswick (Suffolk) on 8th was not such an unusual record, but a **Great Skua** *S. skua*

Latest news

First-winter **Forster's Tern** *Sterna forsteri* at Falmouth (Cornwall): new to Britain and Ireland.

Rarities Committee: help needed

To assist the Rarities Committee to arrive at a proper decision, reports are urgently required from any observers of (1) a Greenish (or Arctic) Warbler at The Hood, Blakeney

Point, Norfolk, on 12th and 13th August 1977; (2) a Blyth's Reed Warbler at Weybourne, Norfolk, in October 1979; and (3) a Lesser Kestrel at Blackrock, Cornwall, from 16th September to at least 15th October 1979. Discussion as to the identity of these individuals is particularly welcomed and should be sent to the hon. secretary (see inside front cover).

Review

Population Ecology of Raptors. By Ian Newton. T. & A. D. Poyser, Berkhamsted, 1979. 399 pages; 71 black-and-white plates; a few line-drawings. £10.80.

Readers of *Finches* (Newton 1972) will pick up this book confident that it will be both readable and informative; nor will they be disappointed. It covers raptor studies on a world-wide basis and is an excellent synthesis of the massive literature on this group of birds. Certainly no-one else has brought together their biology in such a valuable and comprehensible manner.

First, the author takes the reader through, in a series of about 12 chapters, what is known about the biology of the diurnal birds of prey (basically, owls are not included in this book, though some use is made of the literature on them). These chapters cover relationship between the sexes (dealing especially with the problems of sexual dimorphism in size and in prey, which is a major feature of many birds of prey), dispersion, breeding and winter densities, nest sites (in some species particular sites are strongly traditional and may have been used year after year by many generations of birds over several centuries), breeding seasons, breeding strategies and breeding rates, behaviour, fidelity to nest site, movement, and mortality. Through all this, Ian Newton makes comparisons between the different species in different parts of the world. Many of the aspects of raptor biology discussed can be related to type of prey or prey abundance. For example, sexual dimorphism in size is small in birds that feed primarily on insects, larger in those that take mammals and largest of all in those that feed mainly on birds; clutch size tends to be larger in species that take mammals than in those that take birds. As the author explains, both these correlations are widespread in different groups of raptors, but the reasons for them are not fully understood. The author's general conclusion, however, is that 'in the absence of human intervention, almost every aspect of the natural population ecology of a given raptor species can be explained in terms of food'.

Following the sections on biology, some 75 pages are concerned with the effects of man on raptor populations. The five chapters range from persecution to conservation management and captive breeding, but also contain two major chapters on DDT and other pesticides and pollutants. If this should seem excessive, the reader will soon discover why. Birds of prey are often highly susceptible to these substances because, being high in the food chain, they tend to concentrate them. (Again, differences in diet are apparent: bird-eaters tend to carry higher levels of certain pesticides than do mammal-eaters, the reason no doubt that the British Sparrowhawk populations collapsed in the 1960s while those of the Kestrel did not.) As a result, not only do many raptors die from these substances, but they are relatively easily seen and studied. It is largely due to the work done on this group of birds that public awareness of pesticide dangers has arisen. Without raptors, almost no bans on the use of these chemicals would have been implemented. These two chapters provide one of the clearest general descriptions of the problems and incidence of the use of pesticides that I have seen. They should be compulsory reading for our legislators and are certainly recommended reading, whether one has an interest in raptors or not.

The basic text runs to almost 300 pages. This is supported with close on 50 text figures and 70 tables (slightly irritatingly, the latter are all at the end of the book, and so have to be searched for each time), and a massive bibliography of close on 800 references. There are a large number of attractive line-drawings by Jim Gammie, and 32 pages of monochrome photographs. The whole work is well produced, with pleasingly few errors. I recommend it highly.

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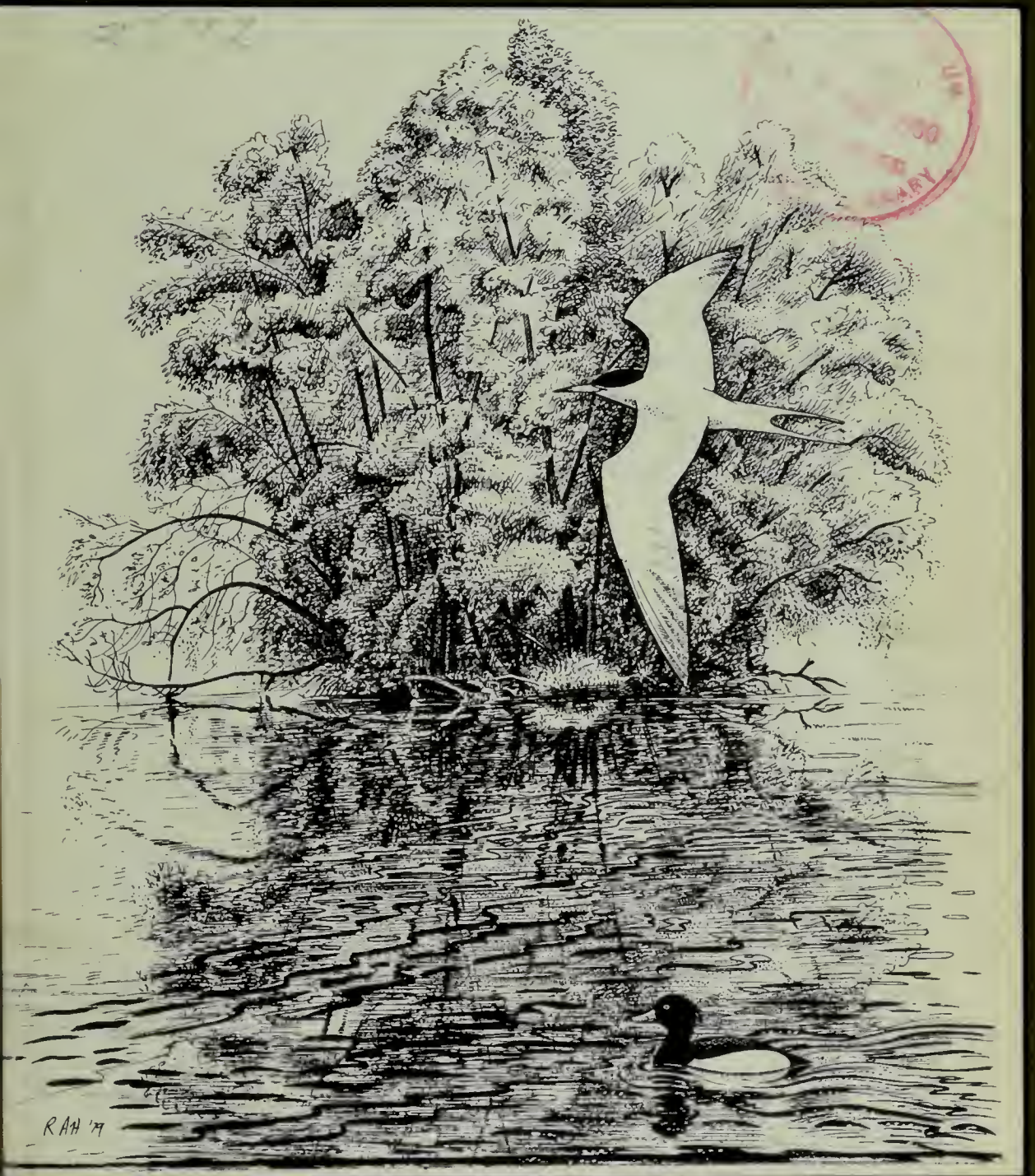
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British Birds

VOLUME 72 NUMBER 1 JAN, 1999



Bird Photograph of the Year

Conservation of Common and Lesser Sand Plovers

Charles A. Wilson (1912-1998)

Flightless Barnard Smith (1905-1980)

Feeding photographs: Plover, Lesser

Plover and Common Plover reports: Rawlin

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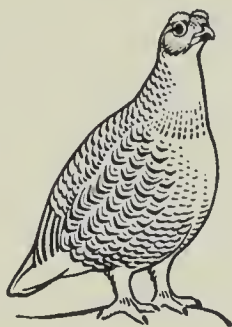
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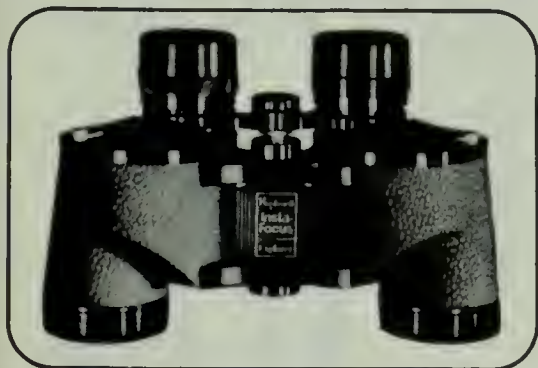
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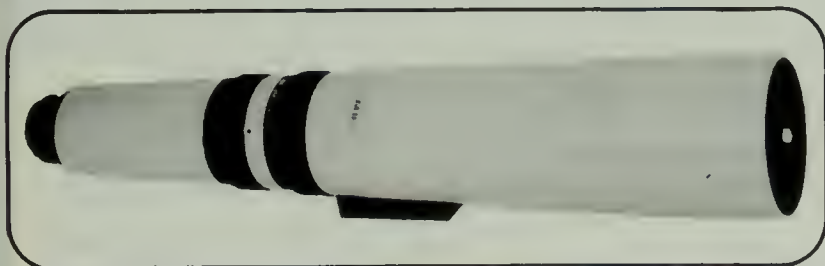
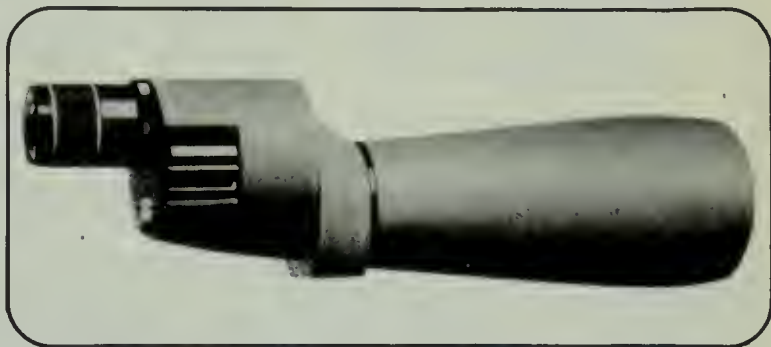
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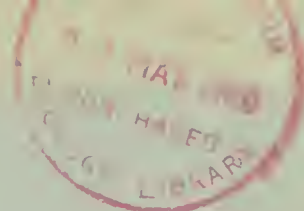
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British Birds

VOLUME 73 NUMBER 5 MAY 1980



Bird Photograph of the Year

The 58 photographers who submitted a total of 154 colour-transparencies for the 1979 'Bird Photograph of the Year' competition provided the three judges—Eric Hosking, M. W. Richards and Dr J. T. R. Sharrock—with an even

more difficult task than in any of the previous three years. The general standard was exceedingly high and any one of the initial selection of 18 entries would have been a worthy winner.

The final placings, which had to be decided by a vote, were as follows:

1st Tawny Owl (plate 113)

2nd Woodcock (plate 114)

3rd Little Owls (plate 115)

4th White-billed Diver (plate 116)

5th Barnacle Geese (plate 117)

Don Smith, Ayrshire

Barry Speake, North Yorkshire

R. J. C. Blewitt, West Midlands

René J. M. Stet, Netherlands

Gordon Langsbury, Berkshire

Honourable Mentions: Pied Flycatcher by R. J. C. Blewitt, Black Grouse by D. J. Garner, Oystercatcher by Barry Walker, and Stone-curlew by Martin B. Withers.

The excellence of all the short-listed entries justifies our noting here the names of the other nine photographers: I. H. Dale, Dennis Green, Dr J. P. Hillis, Richard T. Mills, Philip Perry, V. E. Ryall, Hans Schouten, M. C. Wilkes and Keri Williams.

113. BIRD PHOTOGRAPH OF THE YEAR, 1979 Tawny Owl *Strix aluco* carrying common frog *Rana temporaria*, Ayrshire, May 1979 (*Don Smith*). Motor-driven Nikon F2; 35-mm lens and Metz 402 flash





114. SECOND Woodcock *Scolopax rusticola* displaying to unknown intruder, Durham, July 1979 (from a colour transparency: Barry Speake). Canon F1; Vivitar zoom 75-260-mm lens and electronic flash; Kodachrome 64; 1/60th second at f11

115. THIRD Little Owl *Athene noctua* with four young at nest-hole, Staffordshire, July 1979 (from a colour transparency: R. J. C. Blewitt). Pentax; 135-mm lens, Courtenay Courier Mark II flash; Kodachrome 64





116. FOURTH White-billed Diver *Gavia adamsii*, Netherlands, February 1979 (from a colour transparency: René J. M. Stet). Olympus OM-2; 400-mm Novoflex lens; Kodachrome 400; 1/1000th second at f5.6

117. FIFTH Barnacle Geese *Branta leucopsis*, Argyll, April 1979 (from a colour transparency: Gordon Langsbury). Motor-driven Nikon F2; Nikkor 300-mm lens; Kodachrome 64 film; exposure 1/500th second at f4.5



The Tawny Owl (plate 113) photographed by Don Smith was placed first by both EH and MWR. An infra-red trip was used to trigger a motor-driven camera and flash. Technically superb, this portrait's unusual feature is the prey: a common frog, as well depicted as is the owl.

Barry Speake's Woodcock (plate 114), photographed in an oakwood, was placed first by JTRS and second by both EH and MWR. The Woodcock was brooding three chicks and an egg when an unidentified mammal or bird began moving through the undergrowth a few metres away. The Woodcock immediately rose from the nest and adopted the attitude depicted: tail raised and fanned, and bill and wings lowered. With a curious jerky movement, it stalked towards the intruder, uttering a weird mixture of clucks and gabbles. The intruder became silent and the Woodcock then returned to its nest. After a few minutes, the episode was repeated, and this photograph was obtained by Barry Speake from his hide.

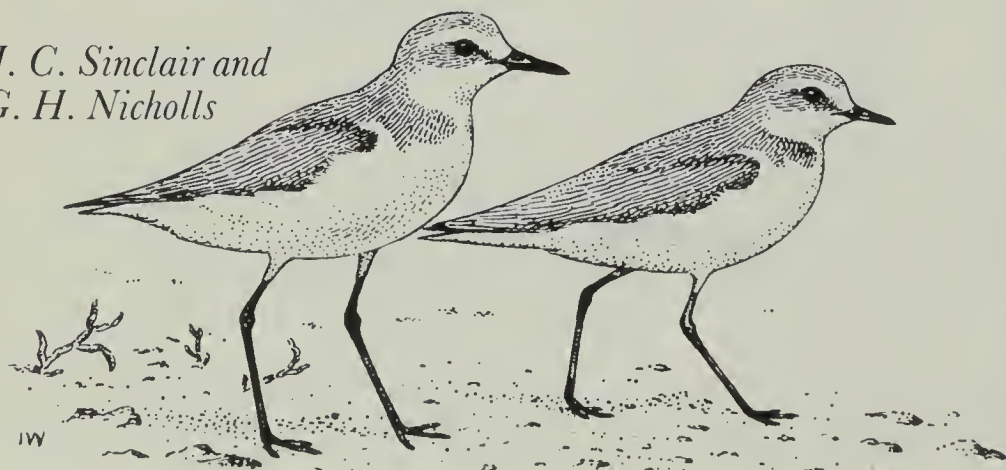
R. J. C. Blewitt used a hide on a platform to photograph the Little Owls (plate 115) at their nest-hole some 3m above ground level. The four young spent lot of time at the entrance, awaiting their parents' visits. Not only are all four birds perfectly sharp, but so also is every part of the tree trunk. It should be noted that Mr Blewitt achieved an Honourable Mention with another of his three transparencies.

The White-billed Diver (plate 116) near IJmuiden pier was diving at regular intervals of about 20 seconds and had just surfaced near the shore when photographed by René J. M. Stet.

Gordon Langsbury stalked a small flock of feeding Barnacle Geese on Islay and obtained his atmospheric flight shot of them and their habitat (plate 117). ERIC HOSKING, M. W. RICHARDS and J. T. R. SHARROCK

Winter identification of Greater and Lesser Sand Plovers

*J. C. Sinclair and
G. H. Nicholls*



The Greater Sand Plover *Charadrius leschenaultii* and Lesser Sand Plover *C. mongolus* are both common on passage and in winter in the Persian Gulf and on adjacent coasts, an area increasingly visited by British bird-watchers. Their separation, however, is not easy, while most field guides do



118 & 119. Female Greater Sand Plover *Charadrius leschenaultii*, Jordan, April 1965 (Eric Hosking)

not give them adequate treatment and tend to emphasise the wrong field identification features. An observer unfamiliar with either species, if confronted with an individual sand plover with no other species present for size comparison, would be hard pressed to identify it in any but breeding plumage.

This paper is based on our experiences with sand plovers in Africa, the Middle East, India, Sri Lanka and Australia, in various habitats, in many plumage variations and in company with many other species.

Generally, Greater Sand Plovers tend to have a more upright posture, to be less restricted to feeding in flocks, and to take larger prey; Lessers often appear more horizontal and dumpy, and are more strictly gregarious and form tighter flocks. These are unreliable differences, however, since Lessers may stand as upright as Greaters, and Greaters can often look horizontal and dumpy. In the Seychelles and Sri Lanka, I. J. Ferguson-Lees (*in litt.*) has seen both species in loose and tight flocks, mixed and separate, and as individuals.

Upperparts

Back

Slater (1970) stated that the backs of both species are grey, but that Greater shows 'lighter hued upperparts' than Lesser. Prater *et al.* (1977), presumably from skins, described the back colour of Greater as brownish-grey and of Lesser as greyish-brown. The upperparts of both species are, however, slightly variable and overlap in tone, but generally appear dun brown in the field. Between January and April, in their normal wintering

120. Lesser Sand Plover *Charadrius mongolus* (left) and Greater Sand Plover *C. leschenaultii* (right), Pakistan, November 1967 (Eric Hosking)



range, both sand plovers tend to become paler, and abrasion and sun-bleaching cause some individuals to show strikingly paler upperparts than normal. Further effects of light, and of the light edges of juvenile/first-winter wing-coverts, severely limit the value of back colour as a distinction between the two species.

Head

Both species show some white on the frons. This is very variable in both, especially considering racial variation in Lesser (those with darker foreheads occurring in the west of its range). Greater is more likely than Lesser to show larger expanses of white, but some Greaters show very little. I. J. Ferguson-Lees (*in litt.*) noted, in the Seychelles in September, that some Lessers seemed the whiter on the forehead and around the face (i.e. purer white, though not more extensive).

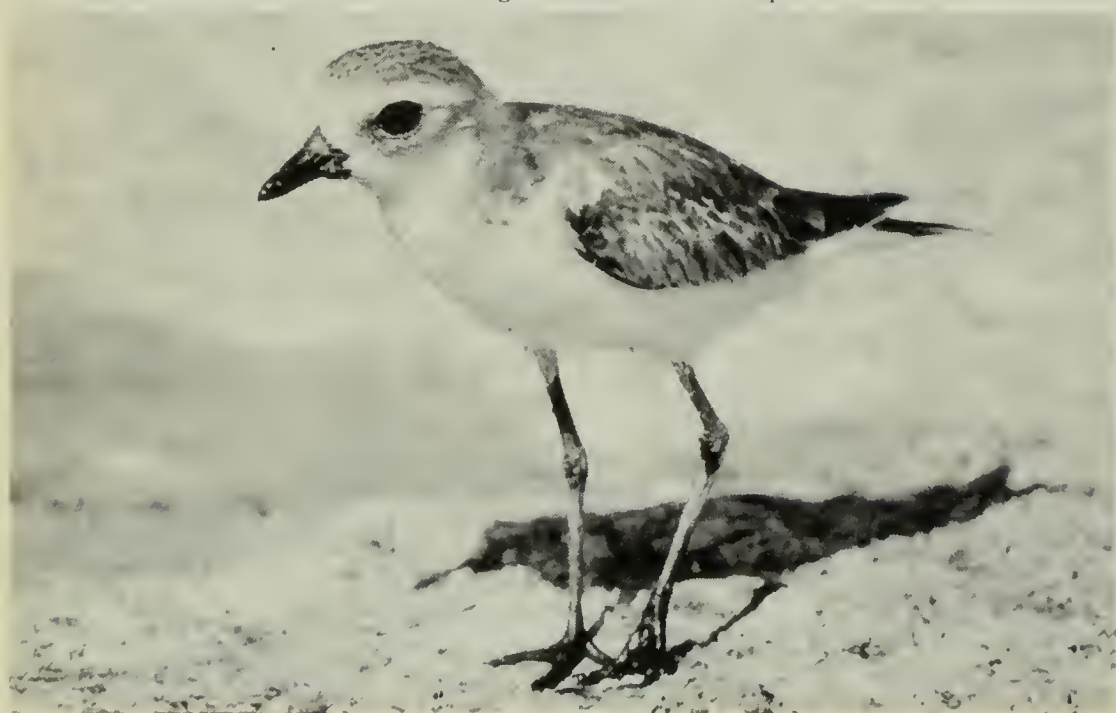
King *et al.* (1975) and Prater *et al.* (1977) both mentioned a whitish supercilium. This is, in fact, not a true supercilium, but an extension of the white frons backwards slightly above the eye; it almost disappears over the eye, but reappears behind it. It is not a striking feature in the field and does not lend the sand plovers a capped appearance. Also, Lesser sometimes shows darker, contrasting feathering from just in front of and below the eye and extending back to include the ear-coverts; Greater never shows this character.

Bare parts

Leg colour

Some field guides imply that Lesser is always darker-legged than Greater; and the latter is credited with being more variable in leg colour, whereas Lesser's legs are always a variation of grey. Generally, Lesser is indeed darker-legged, but there is a complete overlap between the two species. In

121. Lesser Sand Plover *Charadrius mongolus*, Saudi Arabia, September 1976 (G. K. Brown)



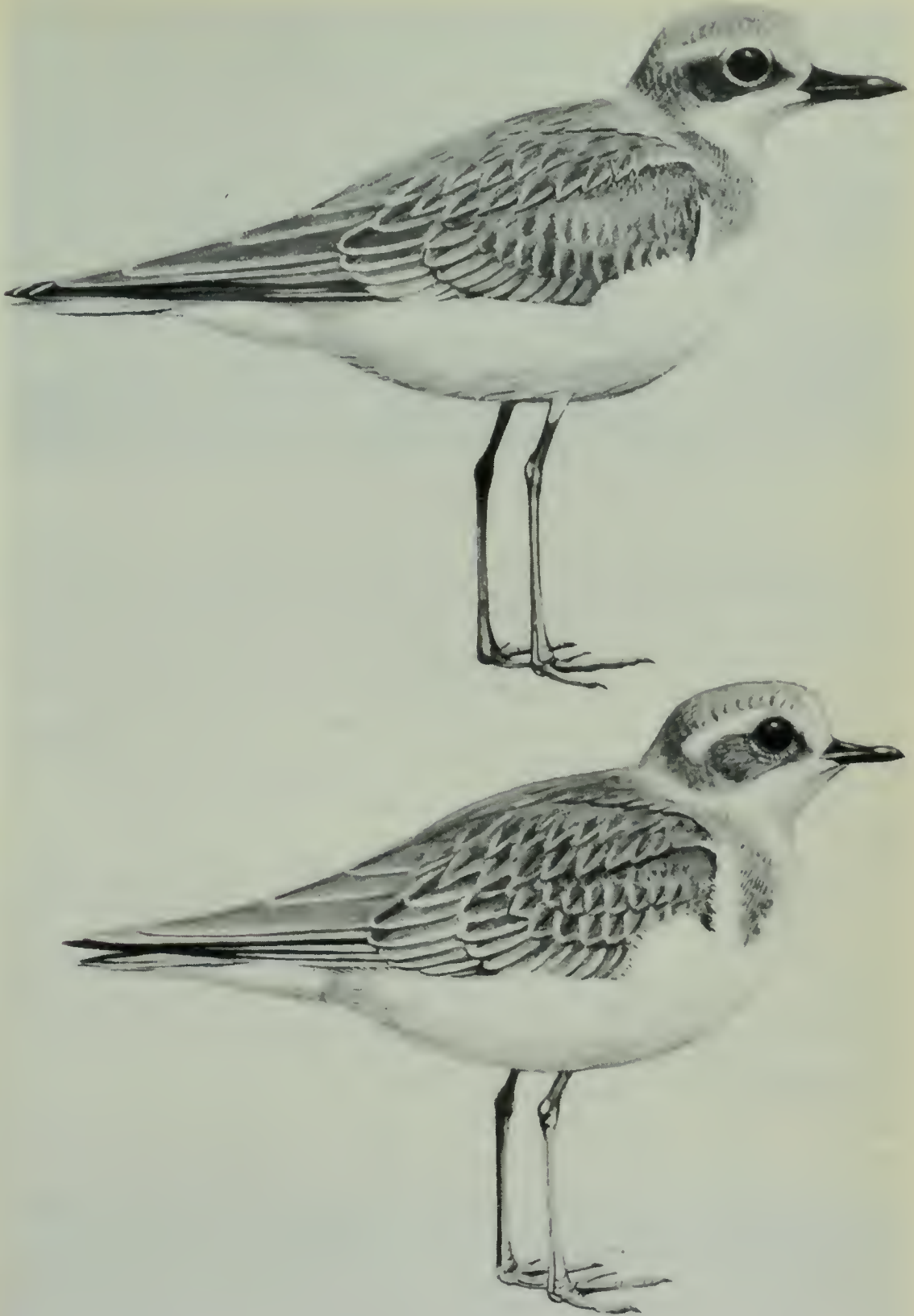


Fig. 1. Greater *Charadrius leschenaultii* (top) and Lesser Sand Plovers *C. mongolus* (bottom)
(drawn by P. A. Clancey)

Sri Lanka, JCS mist-netted a Lesser in non-breeding plumage with yellowish legs, and dark-legged Greaters are not uncommon. In addition, strong tropical lighting often alters the apparent colour of the legs. Leg-colour is, therefore, of no help in distinguishing the species.



122. Female Greater Sand Plover *Charadrius leschenaultii* settling on eggs. Jordan, April 1965 (Eric Hosking)

Bill

The bill, together with general size (see below) and shape, provides the key to separating Greater and Lesser Sand Plovers. Greater has a proportionately longer and more robust bill than Lesser. Accepting individual variation, the Greater's bill is longer than the distance from base of bill to rear of eye, whereas that of Lesser is about the same length. Both species show slight expansion before the bill tip, more noticeable in Greater because of its proportionately longer bill. In both species, the bill appears black in the field.

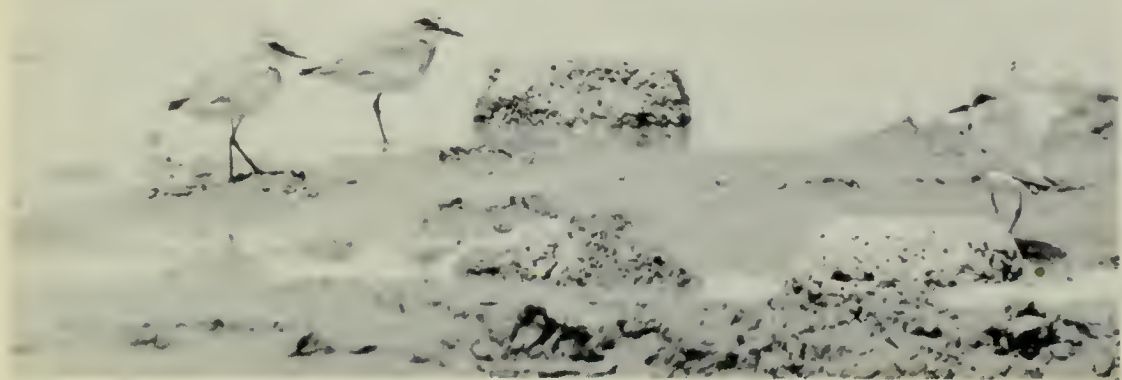
Size

Greater stands obviously taller than, and is much bigger-bodied than, Curlew Sandpiper *Calidris ferruginea* and Ringed Plover *Charadrius hiaticula*, with both of which it is often found. Lesser is, in body size and leg length, very close to Curlew Sandpiper and, therefore, bigger and longer-legged than Ringed Plover. Consequently, Greater stands taller than Lesser not just because of posture, but because it is bigger-bodied and longer-legged.

Flight pattern

King *et al.* (1975) and Prater *et al.* (1977) both mentioned that Greater has more white in the wings and tail than Lesser. One might interpret this as

123. Greater Sand Plovers *Charadrius leschenaultii*, Jordan, April 1965 (Eric Hosking)





124. Lesser Sand Plovers *Charadrius mongolus*, individual on right assuming summer plumage, South Africa, February 1976 (Gerry H. Nicholls)

Greater showing a better-defined wing-bar and sides of tail in the field, but this does not appear so, and wing pattern has no value in separating the two species. Both have uniform whitish underwings.

Call

Various guides describe the calls as trills, and single notes are attributed to both species by different sources. Our experience is that there are basic differences between the two species in common calls given away from the breeding grounds. Greater utters a trill, while Lesser typically calls a 'chitik'; this latter note might be compared with that of a Turnstone *Arenaria interpres* in general character except that it is softer (and Lesser is less vocal than Turnstone, even if flushed).

Ageing

In adult non-breeding plumage, the colour of the chest patches of both species is the same as that of their upperparts. On first-winter individuals, however, these patches are slightly warmer in colour than the mantle. In addition, juvenile and first-winter sand plovers show distinctive light edges to the wing-coverts.

Comparison with Caspian Plover

Both sand plovers superficially resemble Caspian Plover *Charadrius asiaticus*. When standing, however, Caspian is much more slender and attenuated, with a more upright carriage and long-legged appearance (see *Brit. Birds* 70: plate 53, 259-260) which, combined with its very large eye, gives it the look of a *Pluvialis* or small *Vanellus* plover. Unlike both sand

125. Lesser Sand Plovers *Charadrius mongolus*, South Africa, February 1976 (Gerry H. Nicholls)





126. Lesser Sand Plover *Charadrius mongolus* (right) with four Ringed Plovers *C. hiaticula*, South Africa, October 1977 (Gerry H. Nicholls)

plovers, whose chest patches in winter are neatly defined, Caspian's breast never shows clear shoulder patches at any age, but more of a dusky wash right across the breast, or sometimes broken in the centre. Its bill is smaller in proportion to its head and is more pointed and less robust-looking towards the tip, even when compared with Lesser Sand Plover. In flight, Caspian shows only the faintest of wing-bars, and the white on the outer web of the outer tail feathers is normally not visible. In contrast, both sand plovers have obvious wing-bars and a blaze of white on the sides of the tail.

Breeding plumage of sand plovers

In South Africa, Lesser assumes full summer plumage before departure in April, with some individuals showing traces in February. I. J. Ferguson-Lees (*in litt.*) has observed one in Sri Lanka in full summer plumage on 22nd February, when others showed no signs of breeding plumage at all. Greater reaches summer plumage later. In South Africa, only some individuals begin to show signs of it before departure, and full summer plumage is generally not recorded in wintering areas.

In nuptial plumage, Lesser has cinnamon on the crown, which is lacking on that of Greater. Both have a cinnamon breast-band: that of Greater is narrow and does not extend much, if at all, lower than a line with the folded wing; on Lesser, however, it sometimes extends down the breast to include part of the belly.

Acknowledgments

We should like to thank I. J. Ferguson-Lees and D. I. M. Wallace for their most useful comments on our original draft of this paper; and P. A. Clancey for providing his illustrations.

Summary

Field identification of Greater *Charadrius leschenaultii* and Lesser Sand Plovers *C. mongolus* is discussed. Greater is larger and taller than Lesser (which is comparable in size with Curlew Sandpiper *Calidris ferruginea*), but the most important distinction is in bill size and shape (Greater's being longer and more robust). A difference in calls is noted: Greater uttering a trill and Lesser a 'chitik'. Sand plovers are compared with Caspian Plover *Charadrius asiaticus*, and



127. Greater Sand Plover *Charadrius teschenaultii*, South Africa, January 1974 (Gerry H. Nicholls)
brief mention is made of differences in breeding plumage between Greater and Lesser (which moults earlier).

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Obituaries

Charles A. Wilson (1912-1980)

With the death of Charles Wilson on 2nd January 1980, conservation in Britain lost one of its major protagonists. He fought for the welfare of the birds he loved as powerfully and effectively in the field as he did around the committee table. Yet his interest in birds developed comparatively late. A fervent Yorkshireman, he was educated at Giggleswick and lived for most of his life in Leeds. His first interest was rugby; he captained the team at Giggleswick and later played for Headingley. He was apprenticed to the family firm as an engineer, then, as a Territorial, he joined the Royal



128. Charles A. Wilson (1912-1980) (*Ackroyd Photography & RSPB*)

Artillery in 1939 and, after service in Britain, France and North America, reached the rank of Major. He returned after the war to engineering, rising steadily in his profession to become works manager, director, and finally managing director of a large engineering group.

Despite these heavy business commitments, his interest in birds, first aroused by his father, also flowered after the war. He joined the Leeds Bird Club in the late 1950s and became its president, and then the Yorkshire Naturalists' Union, where he soon became active on its Protection of Birds Act Committee and a practical scourge of lawbreakers (though he later denied that 'marsh cowboys' were ever pushed into the water, except perhaps accidentally). His passion for conservation became known nationally and he was invited to join the Council of the RSPB. He became its chairman from 1971 to 1976, a period of major expansion when its reserves multiplied and the membership trebled to over 180,000. A big man in every way, who could be tough when the need arose, he was a cheerful and highly effective chairman, combining business and managerial skills with a shrewd knowledge of human nature and a burning enthusiasm for bird conservation.

In later years, his professional commitments took him to many parts of the world, enabling him to increase his wide knowledge of birds and to learn at first hand of the many threats they are facing. When he retired to Dent (which, to his fury, was transferred by soulless administrators from Yorkshire to Cumbria), he had more time to study birds (and orchids) in the field, but still had enough energy to partake in parish affairs and use his engineering skills to refurbish old clocks. He became president of the Yorkshire Naturalists' Trust and returned to the RSPB Council in 1979. His warm and kindly nature, his energy and his dedication will be sadly missed. Our sympathies are extended to his wife, a successful architect, and to their three daughters.

STANLEY CRAMP

Miss Phyllis Ida Barclay-Smith, CBE, MBOU (1903-1980)

An era passed in international bird protection with the death on 2nd January of Phyllis Barclay-Smith. As Assistant Secretary first of the RSPB and then of the International Council for Bird Preservation, and, from 1946, as Secretary of the ICBP, her unbroken service covered 56 years. By virtue of her skill and personality, she was always the Queen Bee in her global hive; everything revolved around her. Always respected, widely loved, and sometimes dreaded, she rejoiced in her affectionate nickname 'The Dragon', and took most seriously her mission to keep order, make progress and ensure the efficient conduct of business. Ever a loyal and warm friend, she established relations of trust with outstanding active personalities in her field, such as Jean Delacour, Leon Lippens, Edward Hindle, Cyril Hurcomb, Kai Curry-Lindahl and James Callaghan MP, whom she partnered to enduring effect in the Advisory Committee on Oil Pollution of the Sea. Another of these, Dillon Ripley, has written that he 'always looked to her for guidance



129. Phyllis Barclay-Smith (1903-1980)

on the many issues that faced us' during his 22 years with her as President of the ICBP.

Richly endowed with a sense of drama, but equally of humour, of character reading and of means of inducing action even among the inactive, she enjoyed living in an atmosphere of imminent disaster, which was, however, always to be averted in the nick of time by the prompt and heroic interventions of her colleagues and herself. Life with Phyllis could be challenging and crisis-ridden, but it was always also amusing, stimulating and very much worth while. Quintessentially English, she was instantly at home anywhere in the world. She fascinated many foreigners. On one occasion, at a conference which the Hungarian delegate was prevented at the last minute from attending, she agreed without demur to stand in for him, and performed with aplomb the extra role of representing Hungary. She was a Corresponding Member of the Hungarian Institute of Ornithology, and of at least four ornithological unions abroad. She held, as well as the CBE, the Netherlands Order of the Golden Ark. She was awarded the Gold Medal of the World Wildlife Fund in its 10th Birthday Honours in 1971, and became a Member of Honour of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature on its 30th Anniversary in 1978. She also held the Delacour Gold Medal of the ICBP, the Geoffroy St Hilaire Gold Medal from France, and others from Sweden, among numerous other distinctions.

At the critical time at the end of the Second World War, she became secretary and treasurer of the BOU, where her tasks for the ensuing peace included using her international friendships to great effect in guiding the rebuilding of the shattered unity of European ornithology. As a Vice-President of the Union, she also gracefully assisted in welcoming the guests for its centenary celebrations in March 1959.

Notable among her other contributions was her formative role in the International Wildfowl Research Bureau, as its Joint Honorary Secretary during its first 21 years, from 1948, and as an invaluable member of the influential Home Office Advisory Committee on Protection of Birds. She served also on the Executive Board of the IUCN, to which she brought unique experience from the pioneer body in international protection, the ICBP. From 1939 to 1973, she was Editor of *The Avicultural Magazine*—not 'Agricultural' as *The Times* misprinted it. Her knowledge of languages enabled her to publish translations of French and German bird books, and she also published three of her own. It was, however, as one of the foremost contributors to the creation and rapid advance of modern bird conservation, and of its close links with scientific ornithology, rather than directly in the ornithological field, that her life's work takes its place in history.

E. M. NICHOLSON

Fifty years ago . . .

'SIGHT RECORDS. *To the Editors of BRITISH BIRDS*. SIRS,—For some time now it has occurred to me that the admission of doubtful sight records is not going to serve the science of ornithology very soundly.

'On looking through the last four volumes of *British Birds*, including the current volume as yet incomplete, there would appear to be several such references; they must be regarded as doubtful, or they would not be styled "probable".

'I submit that the "probable" occurrence of this or that species in a county cannot have any scientific value, and will only tend to irritate any future worker engaged upon a search of the literature in a compilation of a county fauna. Would it not be possible for those responsible, with the evidence before them, either to accept fully, or reject finally, such sight records when submitted for publication? Their half-hearted acceptance in my humble opinion detracts from the undisputed value of your publication. JAMES M. HARRISON, Sevenoaks, March 24th, 1930.' (*Brit. Birds* 23: 342-343, May 1930)

Notes

Bulwer's Petrel in Co. Cork On 3rd August 1975, during an evening seawatch in light mist from Blananarragaun, Cape Clear Island, Co. Cork, I and several other observers, including I. Burrows, P. Campbell and S. Yeo, noticed an unfamiliar seabird approaching from the east. It passed less than 200 m offshore, and appeared to be loosely associated with a flock of Manx Shearwaters *Puffinus puffinus* moving west. Because of its long wings and apparently wholly dark plumage, I was reminded momentarily of a Sooty Shearwater *P. griseus*; any thoughts of the latter, however, were immediately dispelled as a Manx Shearwater appeared alongside the bird, dwarfing it appreciably. Much larger than a Storm Petrel *Hydrobates pelagicus* and lacking any white rump (which had been clearly visible on Storm Petrels passing at the same distance moments previously), it remained in view for little longer than one minute, during which time good views through a 15-60× telescope were obtained before the bird finally rounded the tip of Blananarragaun and vanished into the gloom of a slowly-clearing sea-fog, about 1 km distant.

Shortly afterwards, accompanied by a handful of perplexed and excited observers, I returned to the island's bird observatory, where the following notes were made:

SIZE Very noticeably smaller than Manx Shearwater and approximately twice that of Storm Petrel. **STRUCTURE** Shape of body and head closely resembled Storm Petrel. Very long, pointed, swept-back wings, occasionally giving impression of large Swift *Apus apus*. Tail distinctly long, proportionately more so than that of Storm Petrel or Manx Shearwater, appearing square-ended. Head appeared small, probably due to dwarfing effect of long wings and long tail. **PLUMAGE**

Whole of head, body, upper and under surfaces of wings and tail uniformly blackish. **BARE PARTS** Bill dark; legs and feet not seen. **FLIGHT** Strong and swift, though buoyant; wing-beats slower and deeper than those of Manx Shearwater, and general flight less direct, with erratic wandering and frequent 'jinking' from side to side. Occasional short-distance glides with wings bowed, reminiscent of Great Shearwater *P. gravis* in calm weather.

I strongly suspected that the bird had been a Bulwer's Petrel *Bulweria bulwerii* and my suspicion was reinforced upon the discovery that this species was, according to Heinzl, Fitter & Parslow (1972, *The Birds of Britain and Europe with North Africa and the Middle East*); 'the only small all black petrel at all likely to be seen in the North Atlantic.' Heinzl *et al.*,



however, and Peterson, Mountfort & Hollom (1974, *A Field Guide to the Birds of Britain and Europe*)—the only guides to identification available at the time—implied that a long *wedge-shaped* tail was an obvious and diagnostic structural feature of Bulwer's Petrel; the tail of the Cape Clear bird had been long, but at the same time it had appeared not to be wedge-shaped. A subsequent literature search revealed that the only really similar species currently known to be in existence is Jouanin's Petrel *B. fallax*, sharing with Bulwer's a long wedge-shaped tail, although the former, which seems unlikely to wander from the western Indian Ocean into the North Atlantic, is much larger. The Cape Clear Island bird was thus identified as Bulwer's Petrel, and the record has been accepted by the Irish Records Panel as the fourth for Britain and Ireland. It is only the second record of a live Bulwer's Petrel in British and Irish waters, the previous individual also being seen off Cape Clear Island, on 26th August 1965 (*Irish Bird Rep.* 13: 14). The other two records both referred to dead individuals found in North Yorkshire, in May 1837 and February 1908.

It is relevant to add that I have since seen at least ten Bulwer's Petrels, in the Canary Islands in July 1979. Most were observed at distances comparable to that of the Cape Clear Island bird and I was unable to discern a wedge-shaped tail on any of them. It is, therefore, my opinion that this field character is of limited value and may be applicable only to individuals seen at very close range.

M. R. ALIBONE

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Posture of Mute Swan On 24th January 1978, in the Upper Cherwell Valley, Oxfordshire, I noticed a single Mute Swan *Cygnus olor* walking from an unflooded strip of grass towards a party of others on the water about 50m away. As I watched, it slowed down, stretched its neck upwards to the fullest extent, with its bill pointing to the sky, and proceeded in this manner for a few metres, with a very deliberate, high-stepping gait. It then resumed the normal walking posture, and joined the other swans on the water. Suspecting that a stoat *Mustela erminea* or similar predator may have been responsible for the swan's behaviour, I examined through binoculars the terrain where the display had occurred, but saw nothing. I then noticed, at the base of the bushes immediately behind the grass strip, a Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea* 2m from the point where the swan had reacted.

W. D. CAMPBELL

Ticknell Corner, The Slade, Charlbury, Oxford

Dr K. E. L. Simmons has commented that this description fits the first stage of the posture adopted by Mute Swans before a body-shake or a wing-flap; and that, since a wing-flap can be used as threat (*BWP*, vol. 1), this may have been an inhibited wing-flap. Eds

Tertial patterns of Wigeon and American Wigeon Convincing oneself or any reviewer of the certain identity of a female or immature American Wigeon *Anas americana* has never been easy. There has been much agonising over flank tones, strength of facial streaks, and the like, and this has delayed observation of the fact that the pattern of the tertials (or innermost secondaries, falling behind the rear scapulars) of American

Wigeon and Wigeon *A. penelope* differ distinctly.

On both species, the 10th secondary (counted from the innermost primary, and thus inside or above the speculum) is mostly grey-white to almost white on the outer web. Inside or above this feather, the next four (tertials) are conspicuously longer and more pointed than the secondaries and appear

dark-centred and pale-margined. On Wigeon, the centres are no darker than a full brown and the indistinct, narrow margins (only about 2mm wide) are buff to off-white; on American Wigeon, the centres are almost black and the distinct, less narrow margins (about 4mm wide) are almost pure white.

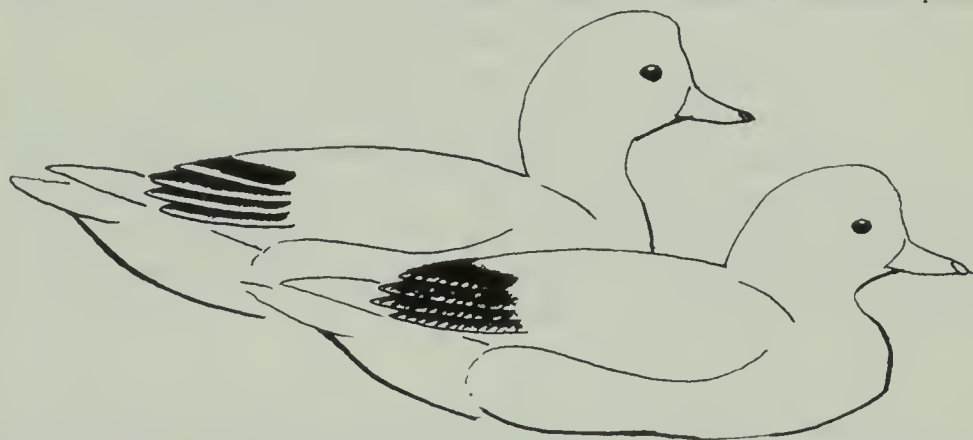


Fig. 1. Silhouettes and tertial patterns of (left) female American Wigeon *Anas americana* and (right) female Wigeon *A. penelope*. Note clean edges and greater contrast of former (D. I. M. Wallace)

The strikingly clean edges and increased contrast of the tertials on American Wigeon caught my eye (and sketch book) on four out of the last six birds of that species that I have found in Britain. It was not, however, until I apparently rediscovered a female in company with female *penelope* in Grampian in April 1978 that the penny finally dropped on the difference in the tertial pattern. I pointed it out to the Rarities Committee, who asked M. A. Ogilvie to investigate it further. I am grateful to him for his confirmation that the difference is clearly shown both by skins in the Wildfowl Trust Museum and by captive ducks in the Wildfowl Trust's collections. In the case of immature drakes, it appears to obtain until the Wigeon acquires its second set of tertials from October onwards. Fig. 1 illustrates the points made above. In good light, the difference in tertial pattern is clearly discernible through 10 × binoculars at up to 150m. I hope that the publication of this note will save future observers of odd wigeons much frustration.

D. I. M. WALLACE

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Coot feeding on weed disturbed by Mute Swans On 24th March 1955, at Covehithe Broad, Suffolk, a pair of Mute Swans *Cygnus olor* was feeding side by side, each reaching the full length of its neck under water. As they faced the wind, the debris and weed disturbed by them floated to the rear. A Coot *Fulica atra* persistently swam close to their tails, sometimes between the two swans, and repeatedly picked up and ate the floating pieces of weed. Although the Coot swam off at one stage, it came back five minutes later and repeated the behaviour. A similar feeding association between a Coot and Mute Swans was noticed at Easton Broad, on 23rd March 1954.

Dabbling ducks will feed in a similar way to obtain plants too deeply rooted for them to reach (Myrfyn Owen, 1977, *Wildfowl of Europe*). Coots, however, can apparently dive to about 8 m, so this behaviour presumably saves them time and trouble.

GEOFFREY BEVEN

16 Parkwood Avenue, Esher, Surrey

Great Bustard taking small rodent At about 08.25 GMT on 11th February 1978, when there was a heavy air frost and the soil surface was frozen hard, I watched a male Great Bustard *Otis tarda* at St Nicholas-at-Wade, Kent. From about 250m, through 10 × 50 binoculars and in good, low sunlight, I saw it become quite suddenly very active: it lowered its head and dashed a few steps to the left then the right; it then 'froze' for a few seconds, before suddenly recommencing the dashing left and right forward movements for almost half a minute; it then ran forward through the cabbages for about 10m. When it lifted its head, it held in its beak a small rodent, almost certainly a wood mouse *Apodemus sylvaticus*. After a few seconds, it swallowed the prey. The speed of so large a bird in the chase and capture surprised me. I have spoken to N. J. Collar, who told me that he has never observed the capture of small mammals by Great Bustards in Iberia, nor by captive individuals in Wiltshire, although *The Handbook* states 'field-voles eagerly swallowed'.

J. N. HOLLYER

21 Temple Way, Worth, Deal, Kent

Successful multiple nest-use by Oystercatchers On 6th June 1974, at Ardwell, Wigtownshire, I found the nest of an Oystercatcher *Haematopus ostralegus* containing six eggs, three of which had the ground colour slightly darker than that of the others. As I had approached the nest, the incubating bird had left it and joined two other Oystercatchers; when I reached the nest, all three flew back and forth, calling anxiously. Bigamy seems probable, but, as has been pointed out by Dr P. B. Heppleston (*in litt.*), was not proved, since there is no evidence that two females mated with a single male.

On 7th June, there were seven eggs in the nest and, again, three adult Oystercatchers in attendance. I was unable to visit the site again until 8th July, when I located the three adult Oystercatchers about 80m along the beach. They showed considerable agitation and I located at least five chicks, three of which were being tended by two adults, and two by the third adult about 20m away. The two being tended by the single adult were considerably darker than the other three. It thus seems possible that the two females were tending their own chicks.

Bigamy by Oystercatchers has previously been described (*Brit. Birds* 43: 23-25, 307-309; 44: 208-209), but in those cases the eggs failed to hatch.

IAIN H. LEACH

18 Burness Avenue, Alloway, Ayr

Posture of Jack Snipe while feeding I was interested in the note by R. A. Hume (*Brit. Birds* 71: 79) on the bobbing action of Jack Snipe *Lymnocryptes minimus*. On 9th October 1977, at Cley, Norfolk, I made a number of

observations of a Jack Snipe, which bobbed not only when feeding, but also at rest. The general effect was as if the snipe was mounted on springs. During 20 minutes of observation, the action was made at frequent intervals.

P. A. GREGORY

GTC, Tambawal, Sokoto State, Nigeria

On 14th February 1976, on the northern outskirts of Ipswich, Suffolk, I watched, at about 25m, a Jack Snipe on shallow mud on the bottom of a concrete channel. It moved its body up and down in a vertical plane as if its legs were springs; this motion was, however, quite slow and not jerky. Contrary to Mr Hume's note and the statement in *The Handbook*, it was standing quite still; in several minutes of observation, only once did it begin to probe. The snipe was probably aware of my presence, and I believe the behaviour to be analogous to the bobbing of the Redshank *Tringa totanus*, serving a similar function. It is probably part of the normal behaviour of the Jack Snipe.

R. B. WARREN

103 Larchcroft Road, Ipswich IP1 6PQ

R. A. Hume stated that the legs of the Jack Snipe he observed were flexed repeatedly, and that the body moved in an up-and-down motion, while the horizontal pose was maintained. In several hours of observation of this species during 1973-78, from a hide at Rye House Marsh, Hertfordshire, I have noticed that it is unusual for a Jack Snipe *not* to bob while feeding; it is, however, more usual that the legs are not flexed repeatedly, but rather that the body rises rhythmically. This is possibly due to the flexing action of the knees, concealed from view by feathers, but the legs are always held bent at the ankles, as described by Mr Hume. When Jack Snipes move a few metres to a new feeding area (which they tend to do every half hour or so), the bobbing action continues independent of the leg action as they move, as noted in *The Handbook*. The only occasions when bobbing is not expected from a feeding Jack Snipe are when it is either alarmed or feeding in relatively deep water.

I have occasionally watched Snipe *Gallinago gallinago* bob while feeding, but this seems to be more of a nervous action (although I have twice observed apparently unalarmed Snipe bob while feeding). In this species, the bobbing always originates from the flexing of the ankles, is invariably slower and less rhythmical than in Jack Snipe, and usually occurs for far shorter periods. On four occasions, I have also observed feeding Woodcocks *Scolopax rusticola* bobbing: the action is rhythmical as in the Jack Snipe, but originates from the ankle as in the Snipe.

BARRY REED

16 The Ridgeway, Ware, Hertfordshire

This subject is now closed: further contributions will be filed for reference, but not published separately. Eds

Redshank diving On 28th November 1977, at Sandy Haven, Dyfed, I saw what, at more than 100 m, I took to be a Little Grebe *Tachybaptus ruficollis* diving in the middle of the estuary, in water about 30 cm deep. As the action was exactly that of a Little Grebe, I was surprised when I had come nearer to see that the bird was a Redshank *Tringa totanus*. It had dived several times since I had first seen it. Eventually, it swam and waded to the

shore, where it ran about for a minute or two before returning to the stream to forage by wading.

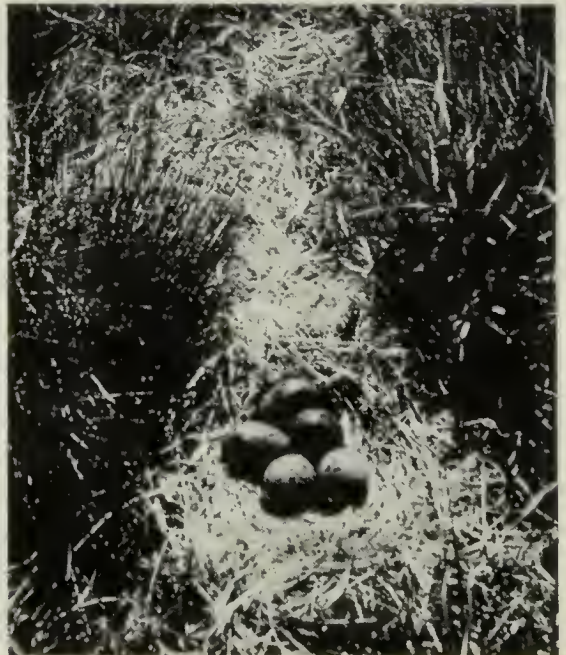
T. A. W. DAVIS

South Mullock, Dale, Haverfordwest, Dyfed

Common Gull rolling eggs from adjacent nest into own During 1977, on Handa Island, Highland, I recorded some unusual events at the nest site of a pair of Common Gulls *Larus canus*. On 22nd May, the nest was about three-quarters built; on 30th, there were three warm eggs in it; on 5th June, these were still present, but there was also a second nest, with one cold egg, within 23 cm of the first. This second nest was not so substantial as the first. On 12th June, there were still three warm eggs in the first nest, but the second now contained two warm ones (plate 130). Seven days later, all five eggs were in the first nest and the second one was empty (plate 131). Three eggs were chipped and I identified these as the original three from the first nest: they were paler than the other two, with slightly different markings. On 27th June, the second nest was still empty, there was one cold egg in the first, and two more eggs were on the ground outside. These last were the two dark ones from the second nest. There were also two small chicks in the immediate vicinity. On 3rd July, and on subsequent visits, the situation was the same. I am indebted to Professor J. M. Cullen of Monash University, Australia, for providing much of the following possible explanation of what had happened.

First, it must be assumed that two females were involved; it is most unlikely that one female built two nests and laid five eggs. Female A laid her eggs about 30th May and started to incubate them. Female B started about a week later (during the egg-laying period females commonly do not incubate; the single cold egg on 5th June was, therefore, her first). By 19th June, female A had captured both of female B's eggs. Gulls are known to roll eggs into their nests from close; and, when two nests are very close together,

130 & 131. Two nests of Common Gulls *Larus canus*, Highland, June 1977. Left, on 12th, with two dark eggs in one nest and three paler ones in second; right, on 19th, with all five eggs in second nest (*Michael Trubridge*)



a gull has been seen to roll in the eggs of its neighbour. Thus, female A rolled in the two eggs of female B, which she would do irrespective of their time of laying as the egg-rolling response is a simple reflex. By 27th June, two of her eggs had hatched and she ceased incubating the rest, two of which ended up outside the nest. It is, however, interesting that both the eggs that were removed were originally from the second nest, whereas the one remaining in the nest was one of female A's own. As gulls are unable to recognise their own eggs, one must assume that this was coincidence, although it is just possible that the two eggs were ejected because they showed no signs of hatching (the other three were chipped by 19th June).

Although much of this explanation is speculative, it may well be an accurate interpretation of what took place. If so, this behaviour could explain the occasional occurrence of clutches of five or six eggs in this species' nests. This would provide an alternative explanation to that offered by *The Handbook* and by D. A. Bannerman (1962, *The Birds of the British Isles*), that two females sometimes lay in the same nest.

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Tern showing mixed characters of Black Tern and White-winged

Black Tern During the early afternoon of 9th September 1978, G. J. Upton and I were engrossed with a juvenile White-winged Black Tern *Chlidonias leucopterus* at Chew Valley Lake, Avon, when we noticed another bird, farther away, which we also confidently identified as a White-winged Black. Subsequent closer views, however, showed it to be a very odd individual, with mixed characters of Black Tern *C. niger* and White-winged Black Tern. Over the following days, it was seen by many observers down to ranges of 20m and it was compared directly with both species. It eventually departed high to the southwest with 12 Black Terns at 18.15 GMT on 11th September. The following description was compiled from notes made by myself and P. J. Chadwick.

In distant flight views, resembled juvenile White-winged Black, with typical dark 'saddle', white rump and pale wings. At close range, however, numerous discrepancies apparent. Dark on back of head recalled White-winged Black in extent; exact details difficult to discern but definitely paler and browner than normal individuals of either species. Back and scapulars dark brown, darkest on upper back, producing dark 'saddle', but this less obvious than on juvenile White-winged Black, but still noticeable at all ranges. Wings pale, similar to White-winged Black, but leading coverts conspicuously white (particularly obvious head-on) and more similar to winter adult White-winged Black. No extensive dark carpal-bar, but some brownish at base of wing. Middle area of wing pale grey, paler than Black, becoming progressively darker towards rear,

and darkest on secondaries and primaries, with darker tips to latter. Some brown feathering on area of median coverts and also small brown bar across primary coverts, but exact markings difficult to pin-point on moving wing. Rump white (although PJC noted greyish wash) contrasting sharply with dark saddle, especially when flying away. Tail pale grey. Noticeable dark shoulder patch as obvious as on Black, but slightly paler and browner. Underwing similar to juvenile Black (white with greyer remiges), but general appearance slightly whiter than Black. Plumage appeared fresh and unworn, with no obvious variegation. Shape, structure and flight appeared identical to Black, with wings long, narrow and pointed, whereas White-winged Black seemed to have shorter and more rounded wings, producing slightly stiffer action. When seen from below,

it was often impossible to pick it out from accompanying Blacks.

Additional features at rest (per PJC): white forehead back to eye; sooty-brown crown, becoming paler and extending down

nape in thin line; dark back appeared slightly barred due to light buff edges to feathers; bill black, with reddish base, same length and shape as that of Black, being relatively long and finely pointed; short, dark reddish legs.



Fig. 1. Juvenile White-winged Black Tern *Chlidonias leucopterus* (left) and juvenile Black Tern *C. niger* (right) with juvenile tern showing mixed characters of the two species, observed in Avon in September 1978 (centre) (K. E. Vinicombe)

Various possibilities can be considered when discussing this individual. As it superficially resembled a White-winged Black Tern, could it have been a normal individual in an undescribed plumage, possibly a one-year-old? In fact, most observers seemed to regard it as White-winged Black without question. Grant *et al.* (1971) stated that, like *Sterna* terns, marsh terns take two years to reach maturity and little seems to be known about first-year or 'portlandica' plumages in their winter quarters. D. I. M. Wallace, for example, saw many immature Black Terns in Nigeria and described them as 'Astonishingly variable, most with a trace of "portlandica" plumage.' The lack of definitive plumage descriptions for year-old White-winged Black Terns complicates the issue, but two obvious features would seem to rule out this species: (1) the shoulder patch and (2) the structure. It should be noted, however, that Taverner (1969) described related juvenile Whiskered Terns *C. hybridus* with shoulder patches, and Rutledge (1969) described an adult White-winged Black with a long bill. The presence of these features, however, suggest strongly that it may have been an aberrant Black Tern, despite its uncanny resemblance to a White-winged Black.

The other possibility is that it was a hybrid. An adult White-winged Black west of its normal range could conceivably hybridise with a Black Tern in the absence of a normal mate. The presence of common plumage features obviously makes this an appealing theory. It showed, however, little hint of a carpal-bar; one would perhaps expect a hybrid to show a bar somewhere between the two. I personally feel that it was probably either an

aberrant Black Tern or a hybrid, but the true identity of this interesting bird will probably never be known.

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 RUTTLEDGE, R. F. 1969. Bill-length as a field character of the White-winged Black Tern? *Brit. Birds* 62: 243-244.
 TAVERNER, J. H. 1969. Whiskered Terns with dark shoulder patches. *Brit. Birds* 62: 33.

P. J. Grant has commented that (1) this individual demonstrates the need to check carefully all the criteria when identifying a rarity, (2) the dark brown, pale-fringed back feathers and generally fresh, unworn plumage clearly indicate a juvenile rather than a first-year, and (3) the suggestion that it may have been a hybrid seems the best explanation. It may be relevant also to draw attention to the breeding attempts by mixed pairs of White-winged Black and Black Terns in Sweden in 1978 and 1979 (*Brit. Birds* 72: 591). Eds

Brünnich's Guillemot in Northumberland On 13th July 1977, R. Pimm, N. M. Leeming and I noticed an unusual bird among Guillemots *Uria aalge* near the east end of Staple Island, one of the Farne Islands, Northumberland. It was distinguished by the different shape of its head and neck, and greater contrast between its upperparts and white underparts.

We watched it for 20 minutes at ranges of 20-25 m. For much of the time, it was preening its underparts, rolling on one side. Shortly afterwards, I saw it from over 100 m, and even at this distance the head shape showed up well.

Each of us took notes at the time, from which the description is compiled:

Similar in size and general appearance to Guillemot, except as follows. Bill shorter, heavier, and much more tapered. Upper mandible strongly down-curved at tip; lower mandible straight-edged. Head slightly bulbous at rear; profile more continuous with bill; whole head and bill distinctively wedge-shaped; neck short and stocky, much more like Razorbill *Alca torda* than Guillemot (see fig. 1). Tail short and stumpy, like Guillemot. Wings possibly shorter and broader. Bill darker than Guillemot's, with faint white line along cutting edge to about half-way from base; possibly a pale tip. Feet dark, uniformly coloured. Upperparts very dark slaty-brown, much darker than any of the local Guillemots, but not the clean black of Razorbill. Head and neck darkest, wings palest and browner, perhaps faded. White bar on tips of



Fig. 1. Brünnich's Guillemot *Uria lomvia*, Northumberland, July 1977 (J. B. Ribbands)

secondaries narrower and less conspicuous. Underparts white, extending farther up neck than most Guillemots in summer plumage. White patch around base of lower mandible conspicuous, probably remains of winter plumage. NML noted lack of dark marking on flanks.

After consulting field guides and *The Handbook*, the bird was considered to be a Brünnich's Guillemot *U. lomvia*, intermediate between summer and winter plumage. NML later examined specimens in the Hancock Museum, Newcastle, to check such points as the colour of the feet.

It may be significant that this observation coincided with a period of northerly winds and poor weather, when there were larger numbers of

immature Puffins *Fratercula arctica* than usual around the islands: normally there are only adults.

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Mystery photographs

41 Pipits *Anthus* are generally shy and hide on the ground in low vegetation, so that, despite occurring in open country, they are often difficult to observe clearly. All too often, the only views are of fleeing birds in flight, which merely reveal weak flight, general streakiness and white outer tail feathers. Fortunately, they are freely vocal, allowing identification on call. The photograph here presents a lucky unobscured view.



The terrestrial habitat, long tail, fine bill, long hind claw and streaked underparts are characters of pipits; the compact form, fine bill and 'feel' suggest one of the smaller species, such as Meadow Pipit *A. pratensis*. Three plumage features are striking and allow ready specific identification: the near-uniform mantle, the head pattern and the heavily streaked (almost spotted) underparts, characters which, among Palearctic pipits, are unique to Olive-backed *A. hodgsoni*. I photographed this one in Mongolia in August 1979.

The supercilium is short and bright over and behind the eye, bordered above by a narrow, blackish lateral crown stripe. The 'supercilium-drop' (the pale spot behind and below the supercilium proper) is not outstanding on this individual, being smaller and duller (buff, not white) than on some (see *Brit. Birds* 72: 94-96), and the dark ear-covert spot below appears not to be black. The relative inconspicuousness of these head markings, the prominence of the median covert wing-bar and the general clean appearance suggest a juvenile. The underparts are heavily marked with black spots on the breast and streaks on the flanks and belly. The mantle is more or less uniform. Reduced streaking on the underparts may be shown also by the larger Tawny Pipit *A. campestris* and the mountain races of the Rock Pipit *A. spinoletta*, but, as the name implies, the ground colour of the mantle of the Olive-backed Pipit is olive, surprisingly green in sunlight, even as green as some *Phylloscopus* warblers.

In the field—if you are lucky enough actually to *see* an Olive-backed Pipit clearly (individuals are normally unreasonably timid)—the combination of green upperparts, vivid head pattern and startling black-white-and-buff underparts make it a beautiful and distinctive bird. It feeds on the ground, but habitually takes to trees when disturbed, where it can quickly disappear among the foliage, catching the eye only by its habit of wagging its tail. It

frequently calls 'tzee', indistinguishable, to my ears, from the call of a Tree Pipit *A. trivialis*.

ALAN KITSON



132 & 133. Mystery photographs 42. Identify the species. What is the approximate age in months of this individual? Answer next month



Letters

Judging the size of birds The frequency with which observers claim to have made an accurate assessment of a bird's size, in situations where it is impossible to judge distance, or where there are no other species close by for comparison, leads me to suggest that there may be widespread overconfidence placed in the ability of the human eye to judge size. In the vast

majority of such claims, it seems likely that the size is assessed after the bird has been identified—size is not really judged at all, but it is known instantly in a subconscious process drawing from previous knowledge of the species' size.

In such cases, I wonder if the actual difficulties of such a visual test are adequately considered: these can be illustrated by envisaging the difficulty of trying to judge the size of any unfamiliar object (or perhaps a model of a bird of indeterminate species) in an unfamiliar terrain, at sea, or suspended against open sky. Largely because of the inability to judge distance, an accurate size assessment would seem impossible. With a live bird, the speed of its wingbeat or other activity can help, but, without additional clues as to its identity, it would seem likely that only an approximate impression of its size can be obtained. How often does an initial impression of size, formed as a bird first comes into view, prove to be alarmingly wide of the mark the instant that there has been time to identify it? The real difficulties can also be apparent when confronted by a totally unfamiliar species whose size is not previously known.

I would suggest that an accurate size assessment can be made only by fairly prolonged views at close range, when distance and perspective can be carefully judged (although much would depend on the experience and visual acuity of the observer), or by careful comparison with one or more species (or perhaps some familiar foliage or object) close by.

Where an accurate size assessment is claimed in circumstances other than these, any potential error is unimportant anyway, because the identification is clinched by other features. Sometimes, however, the size assessment forms the hub of the identification, for example in brief views of crakes *Porzana*, silhouette views of soaring raptors, or seabirds flying by offshore. If the difficulty of judging size in such circumstances is not considered, there may be a real danger of misidentification: it would seem easy to make a faulty initial judgment of size, albeit unwittingly, and let imagination do the rest.

I raise this subject as one who, for a long while, presumed an ability to judge the size of a bird in almost any field situation, because such had apparently always seemed an unquestioned, essential part of birdwatching. Having considered the problems, however, I now regard size impression in isolation as a potentially highly misleading character. I now find it a useful cautionary exercise to bear in mind continually that the apparent size of the bird I am watching is only that of the species which I think it is. I wonder if this tenet might usefully be considered more widely?

P. J. GRANT

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I think that the human eye is better than P. J. Grant allows, and that the human brain makes a lot of subconscious comparisons with nearby objects of known size, such as bramble leaves, sycamore keys, the barbs of barbed wire and house bricks. I agree with him, however, that awareness of the pitfall of size-misjudgment is important and that this should lead to caution and care with unfamiliar birds, especially in unfamiliar habitats. JTRS

Publication of descriptions of rarities The decision of the Rarities Committee to publish details of very rare species up to the fifth occurrence

(*Brit. Birds* 65: 79; 70: 308) was welcome. Not only does this method provide details which may not be readily available elsewhere, but it also serves, to some extent, as a means of observing the performance of the committee. It is somewhat disturbing, then, to find that a few of these records seem to be based on unsatisfactory views and lack what appear to be essential characters.

For instance, Laughing Gull *Larus atricilla* has a distinctive long drooping bill (*Brit. Birds* 72: plates 74-83), yet the fourth British record on 31st October 1967 in the Isles of Scilly (*Brit. Birds* 65: 79-81) does not appear to have been seen well enough (no closer than 400m) for the observers to have noticed the bill at all.

More recently, the Franklin's Gull *L. pipixcan* in Norfolk on 29th October 1976 seems to have had characters not associated with that species (*Brit. Birds* 72: 476-478, fig. 1). The size discrepancy (larger than Black-headed *L. ridibundus* instead of smaller) was commented upon and the bill described as between Black-headed and Herring *L. argentatus* in relative proportion, yet it was sketched as much finer than either. The most unsatisfactory point, however, was the failure to notice prominent white eye-crescents, which should have contrasted well against the dark hood (*Brit. Birds* 72: plates 84-94), and one can only conclude, from the details given of the conditions of observation, that they were not present. This fact alone would seem to rule out Franklin's Gull.

Similarly, the Franklin's Gull in Cleveland on 24th July 1977 (*Brit. Birds* 72: 478-479) also lacked a description of bill size and shape and was based on an exceptionally brief view. While I am not suggesting that the observers did not see enough to be convinced that it was probably a Franklin's, I maintain that such brief or distant views do not rule out the possibility of a hybrid or an aberrant form of something commoner. Unusual effects can also be caused by the light, as well as feather wear and moult. One really needs a close and more protracted view, to eliminate these factors, before being certain of differentiating between two similar species.

The committee is now dealing with many more records than formerly and it is to be hoped that this increased work-load is not leading to a lowering of standards. By their very nature, the initial records of a rarity ought to be based on the highest possible standards.

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P. J. Grant, chairman of the Rarities Committee, has replied as follows: 'It is, of course, impossible to please everyone in the standards of adjudication set by the committee, although it is not often called to task for being insufficiently stringent. I welcome Keith Atkin's letter: I am sure that its content, especially the last paragraph, will be carefully considered by committee members. My own impression is that adjudication standards are becoming more stringent. There is some tangible support for this in the fact that, while identification and reporting standards have undoubtedly shown a gradual improvement, the rejection rate has remained fairly static at around 20%. One hopes that the committee represents a cross-section of national opinion on what standards should be applied. If this is the case, and because a vote for rejection by only two of the ten members means that a record is not accepted, the committee's corporate decisions automatically reflect a much higher degree of stringency. The system is, however, not infallible, and any record—accepted or rejected—will be reconsidered on request to the honorary secretary, with a considered case or new evidence against the committee's original decision.'

'I have examined the files on the three records referred to by Keith Atkin. In one case, the vote was unanimous; in the other two, it was 9:1 in favour of acceptance. The discrepancies in the descriptions were noted during circulation, but members who voted to accept clearly felt that these were more than adequately outweighed by the positive identification features.' Eds

Bird behaviour and field identification Your recent publication of notes on flight characters and behaviour of Wilson's Petrel *Oceanites oceanicus* and Leach's Petrel *Oceanodroma leucorhoa* (*Brit. Birds* 72: 330-336) aroused my interest. I notice that, while Jeffrey Boswall (330-333) wisely avoided mentioning behaviour at all in his description of Wilson's Petrels, the accompanying notes by Brian Rabbitts (334), Douglas Page & Peter Greaves (334) and Keith Atkin (334-335) all suggested an underlying faith in using behaviour as a field criterion, as typified in *BWP* (vol. 1, p 168, field characters of Leach's Petrel).

It seems to me, after many hours of watching seabirds at sea, that most species behave as the prevailing conditions dictate. While it is fair enough to state that Leach's Petrel usually does not patter or walk on water, it is wrong to place such a statement, without the qualification, under the heading 'Field characters', and discerning ornithologists should avoid making identifications along these lines.

Off eastern Canada, I have watched Leach's Petrels both follow and accompany (there is a difference) a fishing vessel, follow and feed around surfacing pilot whales *Globicephala melaena*, alight briefly on split-open redfish *Sebastes marinus* to feed on the offal, feed in association with a fishing vessel both by night and by day, and foot-patter briefly on the sea surface when feeding, both at the trawl and in the wake. Off the north coast of Northern Ireland in September 1978 and 1979, Leach's Petrels flying into a full westerly gale occasionally dropped back and lowered their legs until the feet just touched the water, although they did not appear to be feeding at the time.

Wilson's Petrels, seen in conjunction with the above Leach's off Canada, behaved more as expected. They appeared as if from nowhere, fed briefly in the wake and at the trawl, foot-pattered frequently, and vanished as mysteriously as they had come as soon as fishing activities ceased.

I conclude that a lot more needs to be learned about the behaviour of seabirds at sea and also that, while behaviour is a useful complement to other field identification characters, too much reliance on it is dangerous, particularly in the case of opportunistic seabirds. PHILIP S. WATSON

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These valid comments could equally be applied to the flight actions of shearwaters, the feeding actions of waders, the habitat preferences of migrant warblers and many other sorts of behavioural evidence, which, although often helpful in identifications, should never be relied upon solely. Eds

Variation in Herring Gulls We have read with interest the paper by R. A. Hume (*Brit. Birds* 71: 338-345) and the subsequent correspondence, particularly that of Miss Christine Morley (*Brit. Birds* 72: 389-392).

We agree with Mr Hume that darker-winged Herring Gulls *Larus argentatus* appear in Britain in November. We further agree that it is possible to recognise these birds in the field when seen in a group containing paler-winged British Herring Gulls. In addition to seeing these darker-winged gulls in the field, we have captured a sample of them, including one which was ringed as a nestling in Norway. The mean size of these birds was larger than British Herring Gulls and our sample contained several individuals which exceeded the measurements of any of British origin we have measured, including several hundred from Scotland.

We believe it is possible to distinguish between these two types of gull, which correspond to *Larus a. argentatus* and *L. a. argenteus* on the basis of body size and mantle colour. The only question in doubt is whether it is possible to identify all individuals. Identification in the field depends upon having British Herring Gulls for comparison. It was possibly the lack of such birds for comparison which caused Miss Morley to state that, in Norway, the mantle colour was comparable with those of British Herring Gulls. The examination of skins of Herring Gulls in Oslo Museum and elsewhere, as well as Barth's original study which she quoted, clearly confirms a difference in mantle colour, although there is some individual as well as geographical variation. Basically, the problem is one of detecting this difference under field conditions.

The problem of identifying 'Continental' Herring Gulls from Fenno-scandia and northern Russia in Britain on the basis of body size is not as acute as Miss Morley suggested, providing that they can be caught and measured. Ringing indicates that the majority of Herring Gulls from southern Norway tend to remain in Norway, though some move south, rather than southwest, and winter in Denmark, Germany and the Netherlands. Most of the 'Continental' Herring Gulls which winter in Britain originate from northern Norway and Russia, from which region both Barth and Miss Morley agree that there is an appreciable size difference.

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Guillemots resembling Brünnich's Guillemots Over the summers of 1975-77, I carried out a series of seabird monitoring counts at various colonies in Shetland. It was common to see Guillemots *Uria aalge* with apparently deformed bills, which, on investigation, always turned out to be protruding sand eels *Ammodytes* seen in bad light, though it sometimes took 20 minutes or more to establish this fact. On two occasions in 1976, I saw single Guillemots on the sea which appeared to me to look like Brünnich's Guillemots *U. lomvia* on account of their thick-billed appearance and pale lines on their bills (I observed thousands of Brünnich's over several months in Greenland in 1974). In both cases, however, the pale line proved to be part of a sand eel which did not protrude beyond the bill; further, its presence in the bird's mouth kept the mandibles apart, so producing the thick-billed effect. The birds retained the fish in their bills over the quarter

of an hour that I watched them (I have seen individuals at colonies hold on to fish for over one hour).

I have since seen several more of these 'thick-billed' Guillemots which could easily have been misidentified as Brünnich's. There appears to be no mention in the literature of this identification pitfall. Although Brünnich's are almost as dark above as Razorbills *Alca torda*, this is of little identification value, since many of the Guillemots in colonies in northern Britain can appear equally dark.

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Turtle Dove migration In view of the revelation that it takes nine years to publish a letter on this subject, we hesitate to resume the debate of the late R. K. Murton's remarks about the migration of Turtle Doves *Streptopelia turtur*, which was started by Stephen Marchant and John Ash (*Brit. Birds* 61: 193-202; 62: 84; 70: 505-506), after no more than 18 months, but some points still remain to be made. We agree with Marchant's comments on the drawbacks to inferring the pattern of migration of Turtle Doves in the Mediterranean area from experience with radar of the migration of thrushes in Britain, but there is in fact some radar evidence from the Mediterranean which appears to have been overlooked. Michael Casement (*Ibis* 108: 461-491) detected birds flying between NNW and NNE in the western Mediterranean in early May and between SW and SE in the eastern Mediterranean in late September and October at a time when Turtle Doves, among other species, came aboard his ship, although, as usual with radar observations, it seems debatable quite which of the birds seen with radar were the Turtle Doves. The Turtle Doves appeared on board at night and in the early morning in spring, and later in the morning in the autumn.

Since 1950, we have also spent considerable time observing visible migration throughout the Mediterranean area, including the Strait of Gibraltar, the Pyrénées, Malta, the Pontic and Taurus mountains of Turkey, Cyprus, the Lebanon and Jordan. Turtle Doves were recorded regularly with the other migrants throughout the area, although the numbers seen rarely exceeded a few hundred per hour. By far the largest number occurred on Malta, where up to 20,000 a day have been recorded in spring and up to 6,000 a day in autumn (annual reports of the Malta Ornithological Society in *Il-Merill*); they are also reported to be commoner in the spring in Libya (G. Bundy, 1976, *The Birds of Libya*). Elsewhere, the largest movement was a conspicuous passage, regularly reaching several hundreds an hour, south across the foothills between the western Pyrénées and the sea in the early autumn, in the region where the late R. E. Moreau also reported large migrations of pigeons (*Ibis* 95: 375-376; 97: 306-310). Turtle Doves are traditionally netted and shot in both areas on a large scale. There are British ringing recoveries in western Europe; one in spring in Malta had been ringed in eastern Europe.

In our experience, there is a marked difference in behaviour with the season. In the spring, they are seen mainly in the early morning, which suggests that they must have moved overnight, presumably on a broad

front. When they do come down, it may be in large numbers, as on isolated Malta, and a concentration of British ringing recoveries in western France at this time—well north of the traditional autumn trapping areas—suggests that they have distinct staging-areas in spring, which deserve investigation; it is notable that some of the crops are already ripening at this time in the Mediterranean area. In the autumn, they join the diurnal migrants such as the hirundines, sometimes skirting geographical obstacles such as mountains and water-masses with them, and appear to avoid the long central Mediterranean-Sahara crossing, which is now very arid, by passing either down the Atlantic seaboard or round the Fertile Crescent of Arabia, as reported by Marchant, although there is only a very limited local concentration on the down-wind side of the shortest crossing of the Strait of Gibraltar (A. E. Garcia-Rua, *Ardeola* 21 (Especial): 227-655; E. F. J. Garcia *in litt.*). This suggests that their habit of following the Atlantic coast at this time when the northeast trade-winds extend north may minimise the tendency to drift out to sea, where members of the Royal Naval Bird-watching Society have found them to be one of the commoner stray landbirds (annual reports in *Sea Swallow*).

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Calls of Olive-backed, Tree and Red-throated Pipits Differences of opinion exist—both within and outside the Rarities Committee—regarding the distinctiveness of the rather similar calls of Olive-backed *Anthus hodgsoni*, Tree *A. trivialis* and Red-throated Pipits *A. cervinus*. Some observers claim all three to be different and easily distinguished; others claim that the calls are so similar as to be virtually indistinguishable (e.g. see page 226). I believe that these conflicting views derive from observers' differing abilities to hear high-pitched notes. To my ears, the calls are distinct and I transcribe them as:

OLIVE-BACKED 'psst' or 'pseep', shorter than Red-throated and ending abruptly;

TREE the text-book 'teeze';

RED-THROATED a long drawn-out hiss, 'psssss', starting loudly, but trailing off.

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The Spurn Desert Warbler John Cudworth's recent note on the Desert Warbler *Sylvia nana* at Spurn Point, North Humberside (*Brit. Birds* 72: 123-124) inadvertently created the impression that this species is difficult to identify and is confusable with a *Phylloscopus* warbler. I was not at Spurn on 20th October 1975 and cannot be sure of events that day, but it seems unlikely that observers of the calibre of those mentioned would have identified the bird as a *Phylloscopus* warbler, and it is certainly not necessary to examine a Desert Warbler in the hand in order to identify it. Unlike JC, who was unfortunate enough not to see the bird during its five-day stay, I saw it well on 22nd October, and this confirmed my long-held view that this confiding and delightful rarity is one of the easiest of British warblers to identify. Its

resemblance to a *Phylloscopus* warbler is superficial. It is a small warbler with more flitting movements than its congeners, but structurally is clearly a *Sylvia*. The combination of greyish-sandy back, rusty or russet tail with conspicuous white outer feathers, unmarked head, prominent pale yellow iris, pale legs and small size is unique.

Two minor discrepancies in the field description of the Spurn individual require correction. First, the back colour was sandy with a slight grey cast and certainly not 'olive grey-green'. Secondly, the dark tip to the otherwise pale lower mandible, mentioned in the laboratory description, was also conspicuous in the field.

A. R. Kitson (*Brit. Birds* 72: 5-9) expressed surprise that Desert Warbler has a chestnut red tail and noted that the Dorset individual (65: 460-464) did not show this feature in the field. My field description of the Dorset bird, however, reads: 'Upper tail pale chestnut or rusty, particularly bright at base, with clean white outs.'

D. J. BRITTON

44 Kirkleatham Avenue, Marske, Cleveland

John Cudworth's note (*Brit. Birds* 72: 123-124) contained some admirable attention to vagrant ecology. May I just add that, on the night of 20th/21st October, the Desert Warbler roosted in a small sea-buckthorn *Hippophae rhamnoides* on the inside of the Humber bank; it emerged at 07.10 GMT.

D. I. M. WALLACE

68 Selby Road, Holme on Spalding Moor, York YO4 4EU

Announcements

Society of Wildlife Artists' exhibition The dates of this annual event have been changed from those given in 'Diary dates' (*Brit. Birds* 72: 598-599); the new dates are 29th July to 11th August 1980.

New member for Rarities Committee The votes of the regional bird recorders and bird observatories in the election for a new member of the Rarities Committee (*Brit. Birds* 72: 487) were as follows: D. J. Britton 31, P. J. Morgan 3 and C. S. Waller 27. Thus, D. J. Britton is elected to the committee, to replace G. A. Williams, who retired on 31st March. We thank the three candidates and all those who voted in the election. EDs

Nightjar census in 1981 It will clearly be worthwhile for participants in the 1980 census of Nightingales *Luscinia megarhynchos* (see *Brit. Birds* 73: 197) to note for future reference the localities of any Nightjars *Caprimulgus europaeus* heard during crepuscular and nocturnal trips, since the BTO has now decided that the proposed Nightjar census (see *Brit. Birds* 73: 195) will be carried out in summer 1981.

Requests

Glaucous Gulls in winter 1979/80 Unusual numbers of Glaucous Gulls *Larus hyperboreus* have been reported, especially in the Midlands and southwest England, during winter 1979/80. To document and discuss this influx in a short paper in *British Birds*, details are required of number, locality, date, and age of each individual (if age not determined, a brief description of plumage and bare parts should be supplied). Please send records to R. A. Hume, RSPB, The Lodge, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 2DL.

Norfolk Breeding Bird Survey During 1980-84, fieldwork for a breeding bird atlas will be carried out on a tetrad (2×2 km square) basis in Norfolk, under the auspices of the Norfolk and Norwich Naturalists' Society and the guidance of a committee consisting of A. L. Bull, G. E. Dunmore, B. D. Harding, M. Seago, Miss J. Smith and Dr M. P. Taylor. All birdwatchers visiting Norfolk during March-August are asked to submit any breeding record, even of the most common species. Offers of help with the survey, from Norfolk residents and from visitors, will be very welcome and should be addressed to B. D. Harding, 100 St Laurence Avenue, Brundall, Norfolk NR13 5QN.

News and comment

Peter Conder and Mike Everett

Bird-killing in the Mediterranean This is the title of a report which gives the first comprehensive overview of the killing of migratory birds in the Mediterranean; for each country, except Libya and Albania, information on the number and species killed is given, as well as information about the hunting laws, law enforcement, shooting, trapping and the trade. The author, S. Woldhek, has travelled extensively in the Mediterranean and gathered most of the information by interviewing bird-protectionists, including those from ICBP national sections, government officials and hunters in the countries concerned. The report has been compiled for the European Committee for the Prevention of Mass Destruction of Migratory Birds, which is a committee working under the auspices of the ICBP. The report is published by the ICBP European Section, PO Box 8080, 6700 DD Wageningen, Netherlands.

Romanian atlas We are pleased to hear of plans to map the breeding birds of Romania along the lines recommended by the European Ornithological Atlas Committee. Anyone interested in further details of this project should write to Dr Victor Ciochia, Str Pavilioanele CFR nr 30, R2200 Brasov, Romania.

In recent decades, Lammergeier *Gypaetus barbatus* and Griffon Vulture *Gyps fulvus* have both disappeared from Romania as breeding

birds and current trends suggest that Golden Eagle *Aquila chrysaetos*, Egyptian Vulture *Neophron percnopterus*, White-tailed Eagle *Haliaeetus albicilla*, Little Bustard *Tetrax tetrax* and Great Bustard *Otis tarda* will also become extinct there.

North Solent Nature Reserve The Nature Conservancy Council has declared 1,631 acres (660 hectares) of the Beaulieu River Estuary and its surroundings as the North Solent Nature Reserve. This new National Nature Reserve includes much of both sides of the 13-km long estuary between Beaulieu and the Solent. The reserve consists of an exceptionally wide range of estuarine and associated habitats: a shingle bar, extensive salt-marshes, consisting mainly of cord-grass *Spartina*, mudflats and, above high water mark, areas of fresh and brackish marsh and grazing land. Among the breeding birds is the largest colony of Black-headed Gulls *Larus ridibundus* (20,000 pairs) in Britain.

Raptor Research Foundation The 1980 meeting of the RRF will be held from 10th to 13th October in Duluth, Minnesota. Special emphasis is planned on the following topics: raptors in the Third World, raptor physiology, telemetry studies of raptor behaviour, captive breeding, raptor habitats, raptors in zoos, raptor surveys and dynamics and raptor migration. Particular emphasis on

owls is planned. Anyone wishing further details should contact Dr P. B. Hofslund, Biology Department, University of Minnesota, Duluth, Minnesota 55812, USA.

Bird-chasing David Coker and Douglas Page have drawn our attention to a clipping from a recent edition of the *Boston Sunday Globe*, in which it is noted that James A. Vardaman spent 159 days during 1979 attempting to reach the total of 700 species in the USA in one year. By 31st December, he had travelled 137,145 miles by air, 20,305 by car, 3,337 by boat, 160 by bicycle and 384 on foot (a total of 161,331 miles or 259,582 km), at a cost of \$35,287.82. His final total of 698 species, however, fell two short of his aim. Even the most fanatical British twitcher does not approach Mr Vardaman's obsession, but Stephen Webb has written to us with his claim of 313 species seen in Britain in one year.

If, however, anyone thinks these are commendable achievements, read the next paragraph!

Chandler S. Robbins awarded Arthur A. Allen Medal On 6th October 1979, Chandler S. Robbins was awarded the Arthur A. Allen Medal for his contributions to ornithology. Amidst a whole host of accomplishments, both as a professional with the US Fish and Wildlife Service's Wildlife Research Centre at Patuxent and as an amateur when otherwise not engaged, Chan has been responsible for vast developments within the US banding programme and elsewhere. He is, of course, best known to many as senior author of the Golden Press *A Guide to Field Identification: Birds of North America* (1966), and the innovations that he produced in the format have been followed by the publishers of many other field guides. He has written more than 250 papers on migration, population and bird distribution, ringed more than 115,000 birds, tape-recorded the songs and calls of about 700

species, participated in 253 Christmas Bird Counts and conducted field studies in all 50 American states and most of the Canadian provinces and territories.

Now beat that!

BANC The British Association of Nature Conservationists held its inaugural meeting on 11th January 1980. It has been formed to help both amateurs and professionals interested in nature conservation and planning by providing a neutral ground where ideas and problems can be discussed freely. The Association produces a quarterly journal for its members, *Ecos: a review of conservation*. The first issue contains reports of an interview with Max Nicholson, and a number of other articles. Unfortunately, the very closely typed pages of this lithographed journal are difficult to read and the detail of the front cover is not easy to see either. We are sure, however, that it is very clever, and perhaps someone will, in the next issue, tell us what it all means. For further information write to the hon. secretary, RM 310, Department of Applied Biology, London University, Hortensia Road, Chelsea, London SW10 0QX.

Avon Wildlife Trust The forty-second conservation trust has been formed, to conserve the wildlife of the county of Avon. Further details of activities and membership are available from the membership secretary, Avon Wildlife Trust, 17 Whiteladies Road, Bristol BS8 1BP.

Birds in Northumbria This annual report contains 116 pages, chiefly taken up by the classified list which seems to be very comprehensive and well set out. There are two shorter reports: one particularly useful one on the breeding biology of the Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus* in the Kielder Forest and a short report on the swans of Northumberland in 1978. Price £2.75 post free from K. Dures, 5 Bath Terrace, Tynemouth, Tyne & Wear.

Opinions expressed in this feature are not necessarily those of the editors of British Birds

Recent reports

R. A. Hume and K. Allsopp

These are largely unchecked reports, not authenticated records

This report refers to February and unless otherwise stated all dates refer to that month.

The westerly airflow during the first half of the month brought mainly mild conditions as

Atlantic depressions dominated the weather pattern. During the second half, the dominant feature was a persistent high pressure region over Western Europe; the resulting air from the south and east was, however, also generally mild, and no severe conditions arose to disturb the established winter visitors.

Wildfowl

An **American Wigeon** *Anas americana* was discovered at Elmley (Kent) early in the month and several **Ring-necked Ducks** *Aythya collaris* remained from December and January. A scattering of **Ferruginous Ducks** *A. nyroca* was reported. **Pochards** *A. ferina* reached an exceptional peak of 3,000 in the Derwent Valley (North Yorkshire) and there were 645 at Durleigh Reservoir (Somerset) on 3rd. Flocks of **Ruddy Ducks** *Oxyura jamaicensis* in the Midlands included 300 at Blithfield Reservoir and 131 at Belvide Reservoir (both Stafford) on 10th and 16th respectively, but elsewhere numbers were much smaller. Another **Surf Scoter** *Melanitta perspicillata* occurred at Kirkcaldy (Fife) from 17th onwards. **White-fronted Geese** *Anser albifrons* totalled 2,100 at Slimbridge (Gloucester) on 20th and as many as five **Lesser White-fronted Geese** *A. erythropus* were reported to be with them. **Bewick's Swans** *Cygnus columbianus* reached almost 3,000 in the Fens (Cambridgeshire) with peaks of 2,600 on the Ouse Washes and almost 1,000 at times on the Nene Washes. Numbers at Slimbridge reached around 400, and 103 were on Southlake Moor (Somerset) on 10th. At North Moor (Somerset) 14,100 **Lapwings** *Vanellus vanellus* were counted on 3rd.

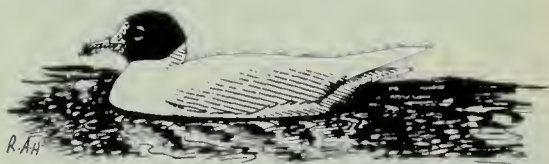
Red-throated Divers *Gavia stellata* totalled 125 off Minsmere (Suffolk) on 10th, but an even more impressive record earlier concerned 521 divers—probably all Red-throated—flying south off the Lincolnshire coast on 6th January.

Gulls and terns

Glaucous Gulls *Larus hyperboreus* continued to attract attention, especially in the north-east, in north and east Scotland and in the Midlands, but others were noted on the English east and south coasts and in Ireland. Ogston Reservoir (Derby) had several individuals and the south Staffordshire reservoirs had eight or ten between them, with up to five at Blithfield and four at Chasewater at any one time, although at least seven individuals

have appeared at the latter site. **Iceland Gulls** *L. glaucoides* were reported from New Brighton (Merseyside)—where the regular bird still provides opportunities to learn the character of this sometimes tricky species—Blithfield (one), Chasewater (two or more, irregularly), Kingsbury (Warwick) on 1st March and Walberswick (Suffolk).

Mediterranean Gulls *L. melanocephalus* continued to be numerous, with up to 20 at



Folkestone (Kent), five at Radipole Lake (Dorset), two in Dublin Bay (Dublin) on 9th and an adult roosting inland at Blithfield from 17th onwards. There was a **Ring-billed Gull** *L. delawarensis* at Blackmoorfoot Reservoir (West Yorkshire) in mid January. A **Franklin's Gull** *L. pipixcan* stayed for a few days at Severn Beach (Avon) at the end of the month.

Sandwich Terns *Sterna sandvicensis* were noted at Musselburgh (Lothian) on 13th January, Ayr (Strathclyde) on 20th January, on Jersey (Channel Islands) on 27th January and on the River Bure (Norfolk) on 19th.

Passerines and near-passerines

Lapland Buntings *Calcarius lapponicus* included one inland at West Sedge Moor (Somerset) on 13th January, five at Siblyback Reservoir (Cornwall) and 85 at a south Norfolk locality at the end of January. The **Two-barred Crossbill** *Loxia leucoptera* remained on Cannock Chase (Stafford) into March, with 30 or more Crossbills *L. curvirostra* including one immature male with white wing-bars quite prominent (but narrow) and thin tertial fringes (but not terminal spots). A displaying pair of Two-barred Crossbills was reported from a Scottish site.

There was a **Sand Martin** *Riparia riparia* at Torcross (Devon) on 10th and another early in the month in Bedfordshire. A **House Martin** *Delichon urbica* was also in Devon on 16th and **Swallows** *Hirundo rustica* at St Bees Head (Cumbria) on 2nd March. On that date, **Cuckoos** *Cuculus canorus* were reported at Portland Bill (Dorset) and Pagham Harbour (West Sussex). Up to five **Firecrests** *Regulus ignicapillus* were in the Weymouth area (Dorset) and **Blackcaps** *Sylvia atricapilla* and **Chiffchaffs** *Phylloscopus collybita* both

appear to have been widespread during the winter. The **Belted Kingfisher** *Ceryle alcyon* was well seen on 24th, despite rumours of its departure.

Raptors

Up to four **Rough-legged Buzzards** *Buteo lagopus* were to be found in Suffolk, and occasional **Goshawks** *Accipiter gentilis* were seen on the East Anglian coast. A **Red Kite** *Milvus milvus* was found at Limavady (Derry) on 3rd.

Latest news

In mid April: two **Night Herons** *Nycticorax nycticorax* at Southport (Lancashire), **Great White Egret** *Egretta alba* at Caerlaverock (Dumfries & Galloway), **Franklin's Gull** at Radipole (Dorset), **Tawny Pipit** *Anthus campestris* at Weybourne (Norfolk), several **Hoopoes** *Upupa epops* in English south coast counties, and an early influx of **Black Terns** *Chlidonias niger* extending at least from Avon in the west to Norfolk in the east.

Review

Guide to Living Birds. By J. E. Webb, J. A. Wallwork and J. H. Elgood. Macmillan Press, London, 1979. 291 pages; many figures and maps. £4.95.

This is claimed to be a reference work for the university undergraduate studying birds, and to have much to offer the layman. It is a brief summary of the attributes which define and characterise birds from the zoological viewpoint, followed by a systematic arrangement down to families (subfamilies in the enlarged Muscicapidae) which lists diagnostic characters at each stage.

The general scheme is very similar to that which is done in less diagnostic detail—but far better—in the last 233 pages of the current edition of Van Tyne & Berger's *Fundamentals of Ornithology*. In the present work, the authors appear uncertain at times whether they are preparing a zoologist's manual or a child's guide, and the text is an odd mixture of the technical and the trivial. It appears to have been prepared, after reference to earlier standard works, by authors unfamiliar with current information on birds. The classification, now a quarter of a century old, is that used by *A New Dictionary of Birds*, and there appears to be no awareness of subsequent consensual modifications, as in recent volumes of Peters's *Checklist*; nor of present ideas, such as that the flamingos are closest to ducks but preferably placed in a separate order, or that the Hoatzin appears to be an aberrant cuckoo. There is no suggestion of alternative arrangements, which might be of interest to the serious student.

The usual sequence of orders is given, but then subdivided to fit, rather inadequately, into alleged 'ecological groupings'. The text contains an inconsistent blend of allegations of uncertain affinities of major taxa and arbitrary complex subdivisions. An underlying assumption that birds cannot really be properly classified appears implicit in the whole work.

The number and type of diagnostic characters presented for each subdivision vary widely and inconsistently, making systematic comparison difficult. They are better in some non-passerine groups than in the passerines. An example of poor results in the latter is shown by the tit family (Paridae), here including the penduline and long-tailed tits, currently regarded as in separate families. It is illustrated by a Great Tit and a parrotbill masquerading as a long-tailed tit. The only characters given to separate them from other songbirds are that these are very small, typically with soft, thick, boldly coloured plumage, and have small conical bills and short strong legs (like Redpolls?).

A major part of the book, nearly a third of the space for each family, is occupied by sketches of 'typical' birds of the groups. These are not well done; the bills and feet, which tend to be important in this context, are particularly poor. In general, the figures look like entries in a children's drawing competition, with poor comprehension of underlying structures. It doesn't help when an apparent Osprey is labelled 'Kestrel' and what may have started out as a Killdeer is labelled 'Semipalmated Plover'.

The work is uneven, not easily followed and, particularly for the passerines, ultimately likely to prove misleading, through overgeneralisation. It is not a work I can recommend.

C. J. O. HARRISON

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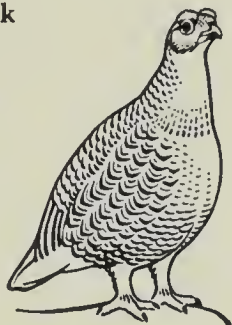
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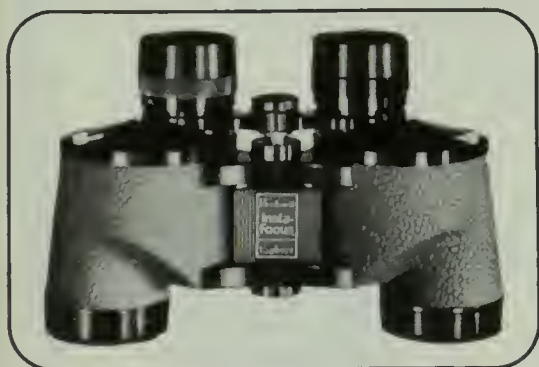
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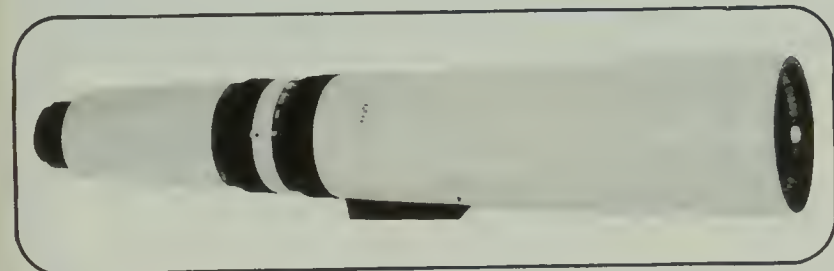
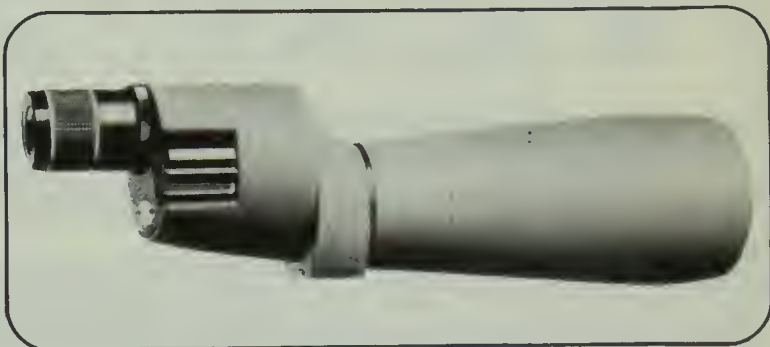
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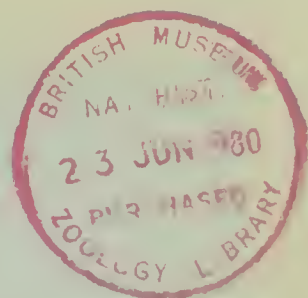
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British Birds

VOLUME 73 NUMBER 6 JUNE 1980



The European atlas: owls

Mike Everett
and
J. T. R. Sharrock



A further selection of preliminary maps from fieldwork by 19 of the member nations of the EOAC

Before starting the fieldwork for its continent-wide mapping project in 1985-88, the European Ornithological Atlas Committee is producing provisional breeding bird distribution maps of various species, based on fieldwork for national atlas schemes. Previous maps have featured Red-backed Shrike *Lanius collurio* (*Ardeola* 21: 797-810), the ten species of European woodpecker (Picidae) (*Brit. Birds* 70: 476-488) and five of Europe's seven pipits *Anthus* (*Brit. Birds* 71: 245-254). This paper features maps of 12 of the 13 species of European owl (Strigiformes), indicating, by the now-familiar system of three sizes of dot, possible, probable and confirmed breeding records within 50-km squares, based on atlas fieldwork during 1968-78. (Records from Sweden were not at this stage sorted into the three grades, so all Swedish records are plotted as the medium-sized dots indicative of probable breeding; many, however, will actually have related to confirmed breeding.) The parts of Europe for which no atlas data were available are shown stippled; the white areas on maps are those where atlas

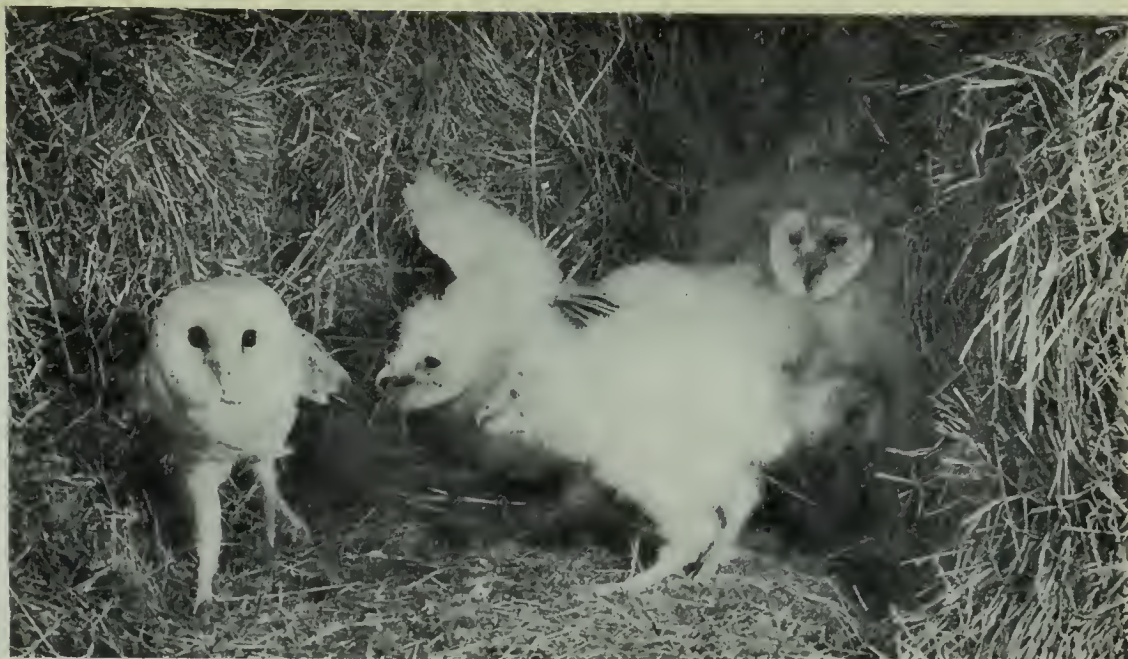
fieldwork has been carried out, but the species depicted in the map not discovered (i.e. absent or elusive).

Barn Owl *Tyto alba* (fig. 1, plate 134)

Essentially tropical and sub-tropical in its world distribution, this species extends well into temperate regions in North America and Europe. The race *T. a. alba* is widespread in Britain and Ireland (but rare in the extreme north) and most of western and southern Europe (except the Balkan peninsula) and right across North Africa to the Sinai peninsula; the northernmost Barn Owls in the world are those in Scotland. This race is replaced by the dark-breasted *T. a. guttata* in southern Sweden (not shown on the map here) and Denmark and from Germany, Poland and western Russia south into Austria, Hungary and Bulgaria; north of the Black Sea and in the Crimea it reaches the easternmost limits of the species' range in the northern part of the western Palearctic; intermediates occur where the two forms overlap in western Germany and eastern France. A third race, *T. a. ernesti*, very pale above, occurs in Corsica and Sardinia. The map shows a broad distribution throughout most of the area covered, but local and possibly largely short-term declines related to pesticides have occurred in parts of western Europe and, in some areas, the loss of suitable nest-sites is an acute problem.



Fig. 1. European breeding distribution of Barn Owl *Tyto alba* during 1968-78

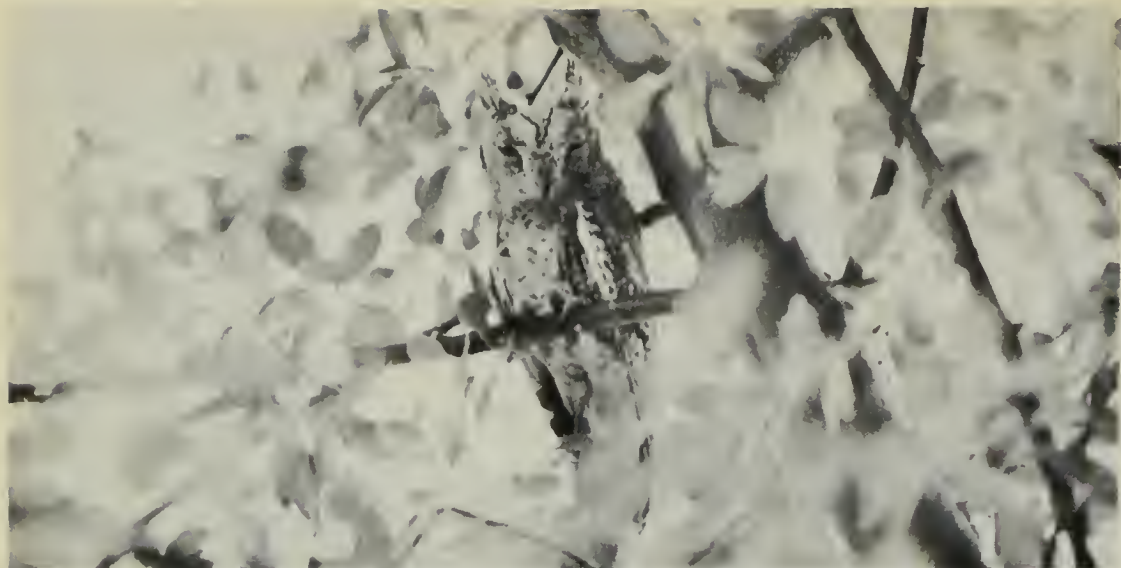


134. Barn Owl *Tyto alba* with young, Lancashire, July 1974 (Dennis Green)

Scops Owl *Otus scops* (fig. 2, plate 135)



Fig. 2. European breeding distribution of Scops Owl *Otus scops* during 1968-78



135. Scops Owl *Otus scops*, Iran, August 1975 (John Farnsworth)

The Scops Owl occurs in northwest Africa and from the Iberian peninsula across southern Europe to the Middle East and beyond as far as Siberia, where it extends north into the birch/conifer zone; elsewhere, it is most typical of woods, parks, gardens, town squares and so on. Over most of its European range, it is a true summer migrant. Within much of Asia, it is replaced by the Oriental Scops Owl *O. sunia* and, where the two overlap in

136. Eagle Owl *Bubo bubo* with young, Sweden, June 1957 (Lars Hedenström)



the Middle East, *O. scops* is found mainly in upland woodland and *O. sunia* at lower altitudes (the two are sometimes regarded as conspecific); *O. scops* also occurs south of the Sahara, but is often treated as a separate species *O. capensis*. Although incomplete, the map shows the essentially southern distribution of this owl in Europe, although extending surprisingly far north in the west, in France; and there have, in the past, even been instances of summering in southern Scandinavia. Some local declines have been reported; these may well be connected with pesticides in some areas, since this is an essentially insectivorous species. Unfortunately, it is also trapped and shot quite widely in several parts of southern Europe.

Eagle Owl *Bubo bubo* (fig. 3, plate 136)

Within Europe, this versatile and widespread species is associated mainly with cliffs, rocky areas and wooded hill country; a very distinctive desert form, the so-called 'Pharoah' Eagle Owl *B. b. ascalaphus* (sometimes regarded as a separate species) replaces the northern form in the deserts of North Africa and parts of the Middle East, although the two interbreed where their ranges overlap. This species has declined markedly in western and northern Europe due to human persecution in various forms, disturbance, habitat change and, probably, toxic chemicals. Although it is

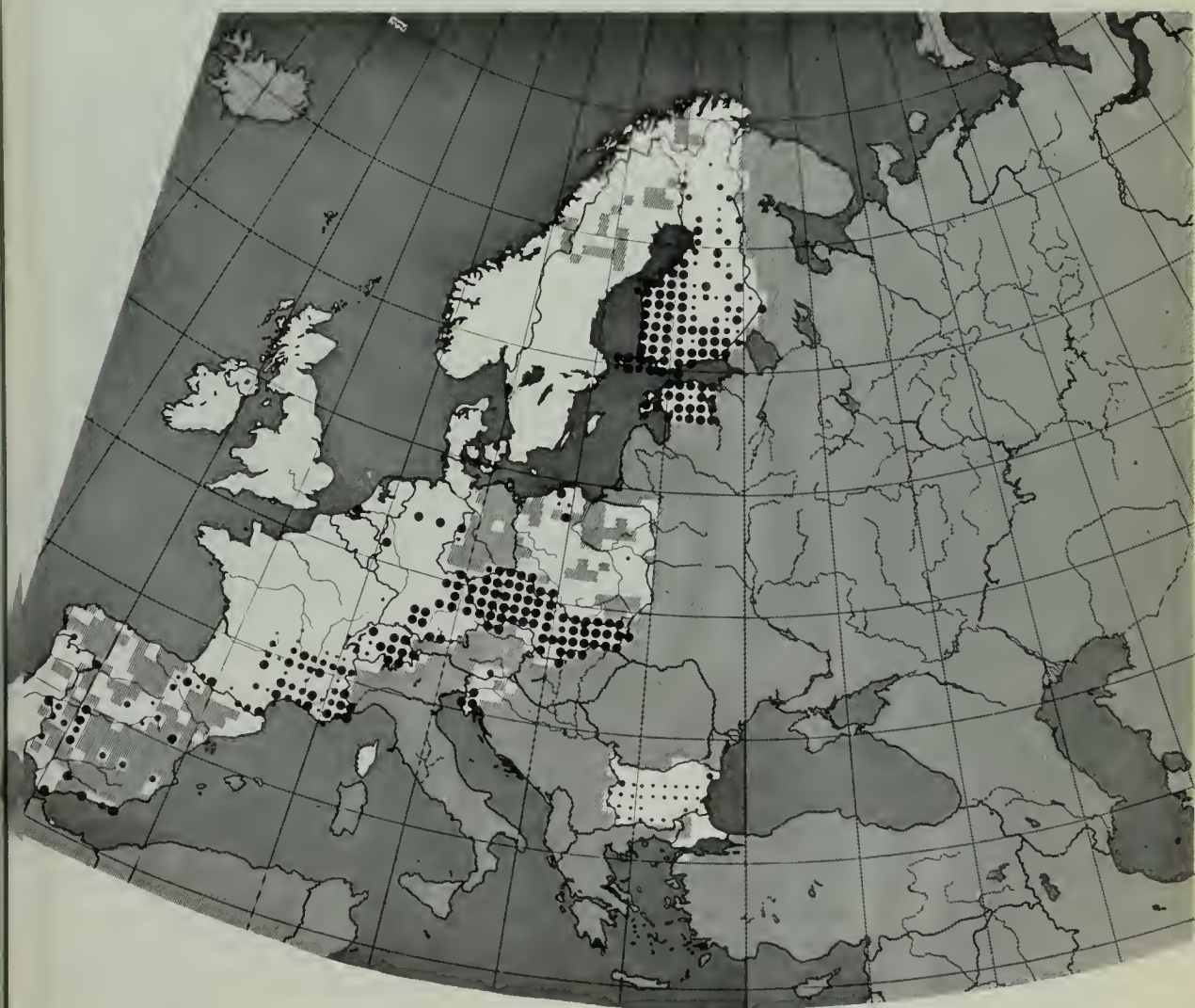


Fig. 3. European breeding distribution of Eagle Owl *Bubo bubo* during 1968-78

still reported as reasonably common in parts of central, southern and eastern Europe, and is being helped by increased legal protection in many countries and reintroduction schemes in some of them, it is certainly the most endangered European owl. The map gives only a partial indication of its present status (for security reasons no dots are shown for Norway and Sweden), but accurately reflects its absence or rarity in western Europe.

Snowy Owl *Nyctea scandiaca* (plate 137)

This Arctic species has a circumpolar distribution and basically replaces the *Bubo* owls north of the tree line. Its numbers vary enormously: breeding density and production being closely geared to the cyclic population fluctuations of lemmings *Lemmus* and, though possibly to a lesser extent in Europe, Arctic hares *Lepus*. Even in good lemming years, it is probably uncommon in northern Europe and at other times is distinctly rare. In Europe, it is confined to the interior of Iceland and northern Fenno-Scandia, though in good years it may breed at least as far south as the Dovrefjell in Norway; a single pair bred in Shetland from 1967 to 1975. For security reasons, at the request of the countries concerned, recent breeding records are not plotted and there is no map for this species.



137. Male Snowy Owl *Nyctea scandiaca* alighting beside chicks, Shetland, June 1967
(Eric Hosking)

Hawk Owl *Surnia ulula* (fig. 4, plate 138)

This is another owl whose numbers fluctuate in response to the cycles of its prey (mainly small rodents). This species has a circumpolar distribution in open boreal forests with ample clearings, in low scrub and in more or less any area with a mixture of trees, scrub and open country. It nests in natural holes or the old nests of other birds, but, in parts of northern Fenno-Scandia, readily uses nestboxes. Like all northern owls, it irrupts southwards in winters when its numbers are high but its prey is scarce, although it reaches western Europe only rarely.



138. Hawk Owl *Sumia ulula*, Sweden, August 1974 (Stellan Hedgren)



Fig. 4. European breeding distribution of Hawk Owl *Sumia ulula* during 1968-78

Pygmy Owl *Glaucidium passerinum* (fig. 5, plate 139)

This tiny bird occurs in rather open mature woodland, both coniferous and

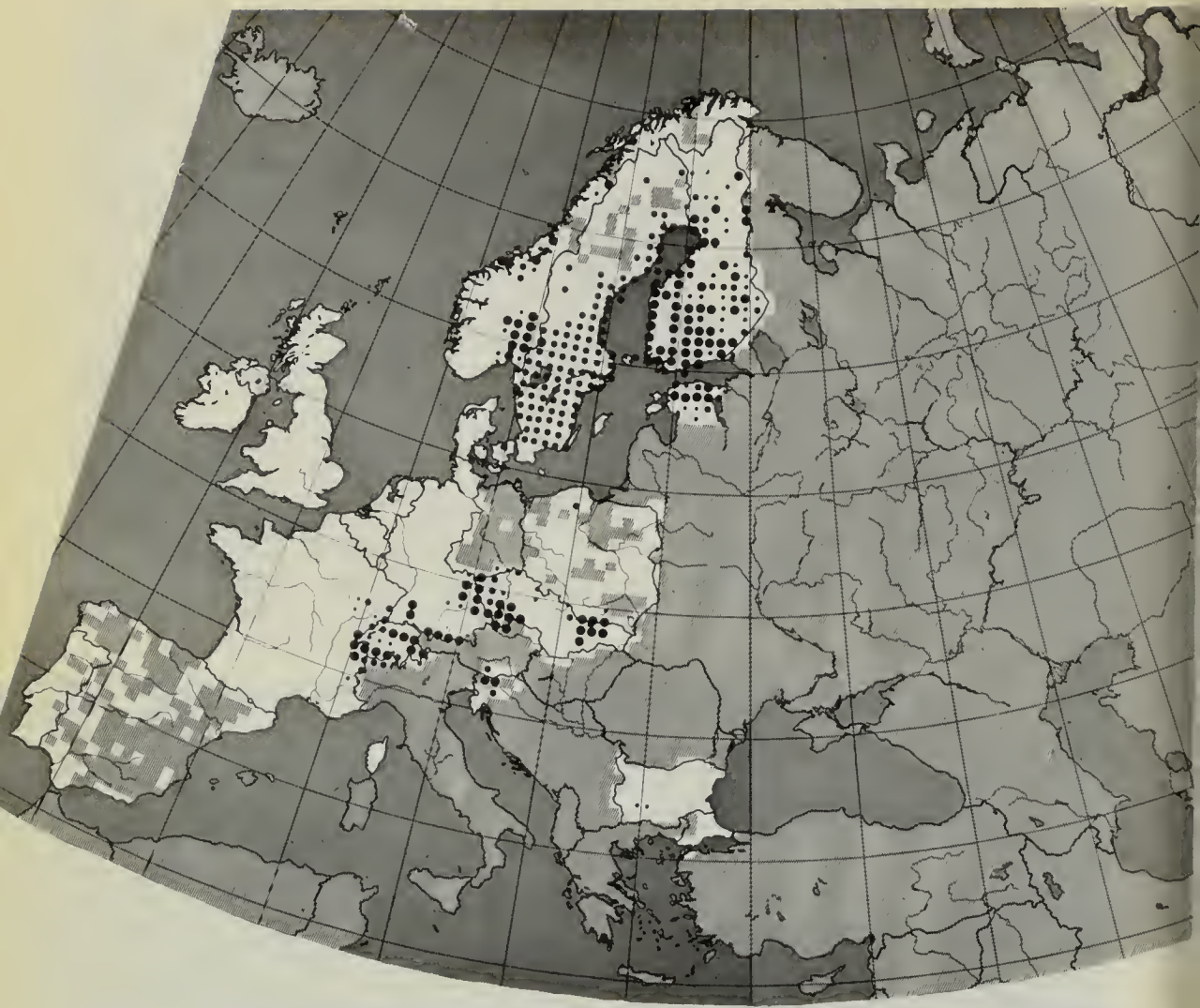


Fig. 5. European breeding distribution of Pygmy Owl *Glaucidium passerinum* during 1968-78

mixed, from Fenno-Scandia (principally below the Arctic Circle) south to central and eastern Europe and then eastwards in a narrow band right across northern and central Asia to the Pacific coast; it is replaced in western North America by the American Pygmy Owl *G. gnoma*, sometimes regarded as conspecific. The map shows its pattern of distribution in southern Fenno-Scandia particularly well and, despite its incompleteness, gives a good indication of its central European distribution: mainly where there is mature hill forest and just extending into western France. Like most owls, relatively little is known of its abundance and population trends over much of its range, but it is probably nowhere common. Being a catholic feeder, it is not subject to much fluctuation in numbers caused by prey-availability.

Little Owl *Athene noctua* (fig. 6, plate 140)

This species is widely distributed throughout Europe south of the Baltic, across North Africa and from the Middle East right across central Asia. It occurs in open and semi-open country, ranging from parkland and lightly wooded areas to open farmland, steppe and semi-desert. In Britain, it is an introduced species, now with a century's standing as a breeding

139. Female
Pygmy Owl
*Glaucidium pas-
serinum*, Swe-
den, May 1975
(Bengt Lund-
berg)



140. Little Owl *Athene noctua* taking common lizard *Lacerta vivipera* to nest, Clwyd, June 1972
(J. Lawton Roberts)

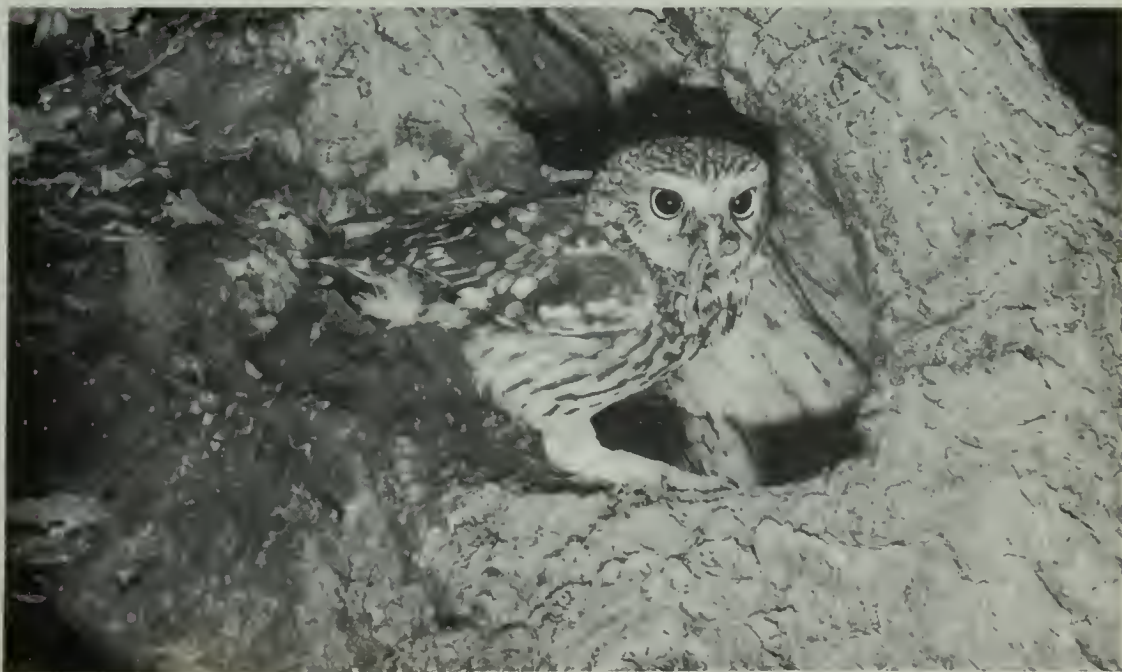




Fig. 6. European breeding distribution of Little Owl *Athene noctua* during 1968-78

141. Tawny Owl *Strix aluco* carrying beetle, 1957 (S. C. Porter)



bird. If it were possible to achieve 100% atlas coverage throughout Europe, it is probable that the Little Owl would be registered in close to 100% of the 50-km squares south of the Baltic.

Tawny Owl *Strix aluco* (fig. 7, plate 141)

The Tawny Owl is the commonest and most widespread European owl, being absent only from Ireland, the extreme north of Scotland, northern Scandinavia, Iceland and some of the Mediterranean islands; it occurs in the Middle East and eastwards into Russia, and then again from the Afghanistan region through the Himalayas to China. These eastern birds occur in montane coniferous forest, but, over most of its European range, it is found principally in broadleaved and mixed woodland; it does, however, occur in conifers too, and has shown its versatility by spreading into parks, gardens, towns and even large cities.

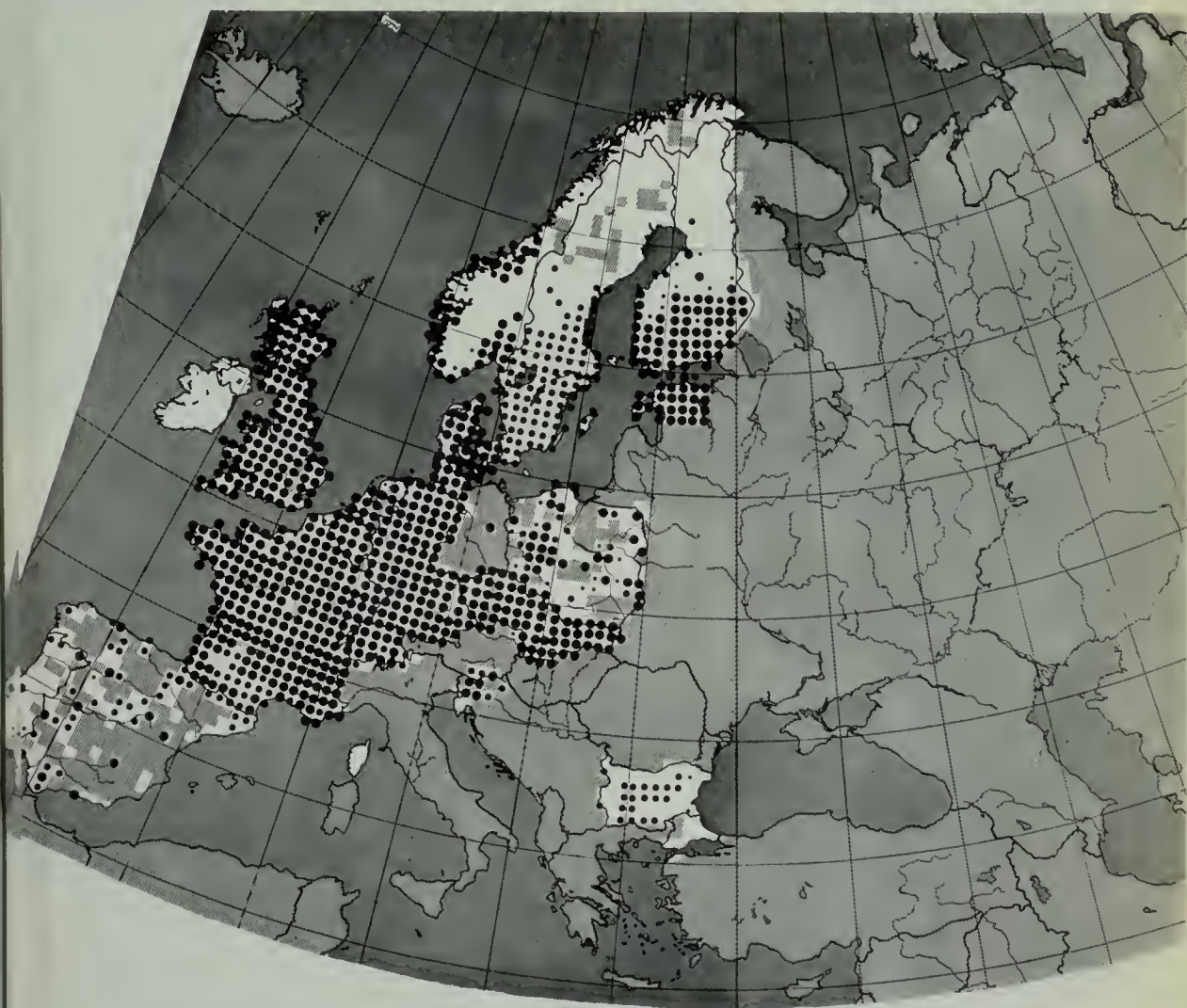


Fig. 7. European breeding distribution of Tawny Owl *Strix aluco* during 1968-78

Ural Owl *Strix uralensis* (fig. 8, plate 142)

The Ural Owl occurs from central and northern Scandinavia eastwards across northern Asia to Siberia, Korea and Japan, with isolated pockets in central Europe and China. Although no dots are shown for Norway, the map shows the Swedish and Finnish distribution well and indicates its



Fig. 8. European breeding distribution of Ural Owl *Strix uralensis* during 1968-78

presence in the Baltic states. It also indicates one isolated population in central Europe (which extends into Russia) and another in northern

142. Ural Owl *Strix uralensis* on nest, Czechoslovakia (Ján Švehlík)



Yugoslavia. Although formerly largely confined to old coniferous and mixed forests in northern Europe, Ural Owls have increased and spread into wet and dry heath forests and spruce bogs; since the 1950s they have occurred more and more near human habitations in Finland, even nesting in buildings, and, during the last 20 years, have made increasing use of nestboxes.

Great Grey Owl *Strix nebulosa* (fig. 9, plate 143)

This big owl of the boreal forests has a circumpolar distribution; like the Snowy Owl, its numbers and breeding success vary markedly in response to cyclic fluctuations of its prey populations: in spite of its size, it feeds chiefly on voles (*Microtinae*) and other small mammals. Although it breeds south from western Russia towards the Baltic states, and has bred in Poland, its European distribution is principally restricted to Norway, Sweden, Finland and Russia. The map gives a good indication of its Finnish range, in the centre and north of the country, but, for security reasons, no dots are shown for Sweden and Norway: it is an uncommon species in Sweden in most years, and quite rare in Norway.



Fig 9. European breeding distribution of Great Grey Owl *Strix nebulosa* during 1968-78



143. Great
Grey Owl *Strix*
nebulosa, Fin-
land, June 1974
(J. De Ridder)



Fig. 10. European breeding distribution of Long-eared Owl *Asio otus* during 1968-78

The Long-eared Owl has a wide distribution, being found across northern North America and almost throughout Europe (except in the extreme north) and right across Asia to Japan, with various population pockets in northern, central and eastern Africa and central Asia. Despite its elusiveness, its broad European distribution is shown clearly on the map. It seems curious that it is apparently absent from Portugal (where it may, however, have been overlooked); in the Mediterranean, it is absent only from the southern half of the Balkan peninsula and some islands. By no means confined to coniferous woodland (although this is often a preferred habitat), it also occurs in broadleaved and mixed woods, tall scrub, copses and shelterbelts and, in some areas, also in parks and large gardens. In Orkney, it nests on the ground in open heather moorland.

This species has a wider and more northerly distribution than the Long-eared. It occurs in the northern USA and Canada, in South America (mainly the southern half), the Caribbean and Hawaii, and in Europe in Iceland, the Faeroes and the British Isles and from southern France to



Fig. 11. European breeding distribution of Short-eared Owl *Asio flammeus* during 1968-78



144. Male Long - eared Owl *Asio otus* bringing young common rat *Rattus norvegicus* to female on nest, Norfolk, April/May 1940 (Eric Hosking)

northern Scandinavia and then east across northern Europe and northern Asia to the Bering Sea. It is essentially an inhabitant of open country, in Europe most often associated with heaths, moors and marshes. The map shows its scarcity in the southern parts of its range in western Europe, but it is perhaps slightly more common in parts of Norway and Sweden than the pattern of dots suggests. Being a vole-eater, its numbers vary widely from year to year as its prey numbers fluctuate. In Britain, and perhaps elsewhere, it has probably benefited (at least in the short term) from increasing afforestation, especially in the west and north.

Tengmalm's Owl *Aegolius funereus* (fig. 12, plate 146)

The map shows a remarkable similarity to that for Pygmy Owl, though this species is more typical of northern coniferous forests and northern mixed woodlands. It occurs slightly farther west, into France, and noticeably farther towards the northwest, into Belgium and the Netherlands, and is found farther north in Fenno-Scandia. In the southern parts of its range, it is especially associated with montane pine forests. It has a wide distribution, across northern Asia to Siberia and northern Japan, with a southerly outpost in the Crimea and between the Black and Caspian Seas.

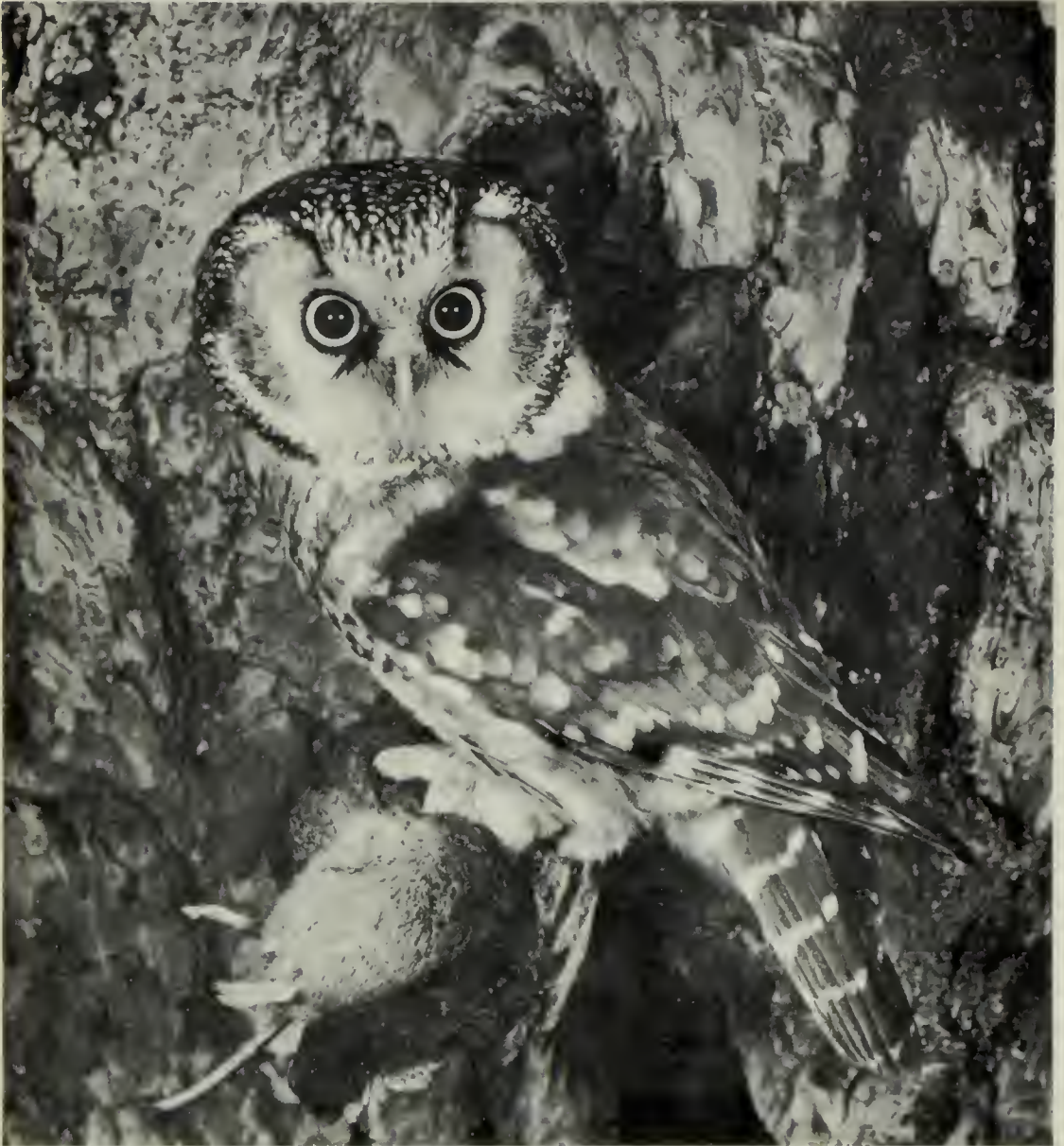


145. Short-eared Owl *Asio flammeus* turning eggs, Clwyd, April 1974 (*Dennis Green*)



Fig. 12. European breeding distribution of Tengmalm's Owl *Aegolius funereus* during 1968-78

In North America (where, more appropriately, it is known as the Boreal Owl) it occurs from Alaska right across Canada to Labrador and Newfoundland.



146. Tengmalm's Owl *Aegolius funereus* at nest-hole, Norway, June 1966 (K. J. Carlson)

Acknowledgments

The dot-distributions were drawn by JTRS from data supplied by the following delegates to the EOAC: J. S. M. Albrecht, Drs Johan Bekhuis, Dr Z. Bogucki, Dr Pierre Devillers, Dr Stefan Dontchev, Tommy Dybbro, Steinar Eldøy, Dr Iztok Geister, Dr Kalevi Hyytiä, Prof. Dr Erik Kumari, Dr Francisco Purroy, Dr Olav Renno, Dr Goetz Rheinwald, Rui Ruffino, Dr Alfred Schifferli, Dr Karel Štastný, Dr Sören Svensson and the late Laurent Yeatman. The base map is reproduced by permission of the secretariat of the European Invertebrate Survey.

Summary

Dot-distribution maps of 12 European Owls (Strigiformes) are shown, based on atlas fieldwork during 1968-78 in 19 European countries.

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Dr J. T. R. Sharrock, Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3NJ

European news

This is the seventh of these six-monthly reviews of ornithological events in Europe. Records awaiting formal verification by national rarity committees are indicated by an asterisk(*).

Unless otherwise stated, all records refer to 1979 and to single individuals

Great Northern Diver *Gavia immer* FINLAND Fourth record: Säppi birdstation on 20th October*.

White-billed Diver *Gavia adamsii* NETHERLANDS Nine individuals during January-April.

Red-necked Grebe *Podiceps grisegena* BELGIUM Second instance of summering: Zwin Reserve, Knokke, until 15th June* (first in 1978; cf. first recent breeding in France in 1978, *Brit. Birds* 72: 275).

Black-browed Albatross *Diomedea melanophris* NORWAY Third record: one at 71° 47'N 17° 30'E on 25th May.

White Pelican *Pelecanus onocrotalus* BULGARIA Migration: at Lake Atanasovo, near Burgas, over 18,000 between 12th August and 26th October, with peak of 4,379 on 21st August.

Dalmatian Pelican *Pelecanus crispus* BULGARIA Migration: at Lake Atanasovo, near Burgas, over 260 between 17th September and 27th October, with peak of 83 on 8th October. NORWAY First record: county Rogaland on 15th-16th June 1976 (cf. one in German Federal Republic from December 1976 to March 1977, *Brit. Birds* 72: 275).

Night Heron *Nycticorax nycticorax* BELGIUM First breeding: Hainaut province.

Little Egret *Egretta garzetta* NORWAY Third record: county Rogaland during 6th-10th June. BELGIUM Summering: Zwin Reserve, Knokke, from 10th June to 28th September (cf. first breeding in northern France, in 1978, and in the Netherlands, in 1979, *Brit. Birds* 72: 590).

Great White Egret *Egretta alba* FINLAND Sixth and seventh records: Inari on 21st June and Hanko for three weeks from 12th November (cf. summering in the Netherlands in 1976-77 and breeding in 1978, *Brit. Birds* 72: 275-276).

Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea* LATVIAN SSR Breeding colony in reeds and bushes at Lake Engure reached about 100 pairs; two nests found there in 1970 were the first not in trees.

Black Stork *Ciconia nigra* FRANCE Two breeding sites in 1979: one in Franche Comté

and one in the west (where four young reared), following first breeding in 1976 (*Brit. Birds* 71: 255); now more frequent in autumn in Brittany, Normandy, around Paris and in the east.

Glossy Ibis *Plegadis falcinellus* NETHERLANDS First since 1971: three individuals in August and one in November, all near Amsterdam (cf. in Britain, only seven in 1958-71, but 14 in 1972-78).

Spoonbill *Platalea leucorodia* FINLAND Third record: at four localities in Åland archipelago and Turku area during 24th-29th October*. NORWAY Seventh record (second since 1901): county Östfold on 7th November.

Mute Swan *Cygnus olor* DENMARK Several thousand died during winter 1978/79.

Red-breasted Goose *Branta ruficollis* BULGARIA Wintering: in Lake Shabla-Lake Durankulak area, over 16,000 in January 1980 (cf. 15,000 in January 1979, *Brit. Birds* 72: 590).

Blue-winged Teal *Anas discors* FRANCE Sixth record: male in Loire Estuary on 17th January 1980.

Ruddy Duck *Oxyura jamaicensis* BELGIUM First record: pair at Blokkersdijk, near Antwerpen, since early November 1979*.

Black-shouldered Kite *Elanus caeruleus* SPAIN Continuous increase in number of records from central and western districts suggests population increase (cf. similar situation in Portugal, *Brit. Birds* 71: 255, 398-412).

Black Kite *Milvus migrans* BELGIUM Unsuccessful breeding attempt at Bornem in 1979* (cf. successful breeding in 1976 and attempts in 1977 and 1978, *Brit. Birds* 72: 276).

Black Vulture *Aegypius monachus* BELGIUM First record (but perhaps escape): Antwerpen on 8th March 1977 (cf. Powys and Dyfed, January-February 1978, *Brit. Birds* 71: 94, 144, 194). ROMANIA Not observed in recent years: can be considered now extinct, as is Lanmergeier *Gypaetus barbatus*.

Short-toed Eagle *Circaetus gallicus* FINLAND First record: Virolahti on 4th October.

Rough-legged Buzzard *Buteo lagopus* CZECHOSLOVAKIA Summer records: northern Moravia on 17th July 1975, and pair (female injured) in southern Bohemia in May 1978, with mating observed but breeding not confirmed; in May 1978, high numbers of small rodents in southern Bohemia (see Short-eared Owl). DENMARK Highest ever number of spring migrants in east: 400 at Rørvig, Zealand, on 16th April (cf. high breeding numbers in Sweden in 1978 and high numbers in Denmark and Netherlands in winter 1978/79, *Brit. Birds* 71: 584; 72: 277). ROMANIA Wintering numbers much lower than usual in 1979/80.

Tawny Eagle *Aquila rapax* DENMARK Second to fourth or fifth records: three or four in autumn 1979*; only previous record was in 1975.

Booted Eagle *Hieraetus pennatus* GERMAN FEDERAL REPUBLIC Vollinghausen, Soest, Westphalia on 29th May 1977 (cf. second Dutch record, on 9th July 1977, *Brit. Birds* 71: 255).

Red-footed Falcon *Falco vespertinus* LATVIAN SSR Invasion in July-August 1979 (previous invasions in 1959 and 1968).

Lanner *Falco biarmicus* BELGIUM First record (but perhaps escape): immature at Zeebrugge on 17th December 1977. FRANCE Adult (perhaps escape) at Seine Reservoir, Champagne, from 4th November through winter.

Crane *Grus grus* BULGARIA Migration: over Burgas, over 5,000 between 23rd August to 12th October, with peak of 3,294 on 3rd October. SPAIN Totals of 12,000-15,000 during winter 1979/80 suggest few or none crossed to Morocco.

Great Bustard *Otis tarda* NETHERLANDS Total of about 100 individuals during January-April 1979; previous invasion involved about 35 in winter 1969/70 (cf. influx in winter 1978/79 to German Federal Republic and records in Belgium, Britain, Denmark and Sweden, *Brit. Birds* 72: 277, 298, 591).

Avocet *Recurvirostra avosetta* PORTUGAL Some in summer at Aveiro Marsh, perhaps breeding; 1,000 wintering there 1979/80, as in February 1978 (*Brit. Birds* 71: 584).

Lesser Sand Plover *Charadrius mongolus* NORWAY First record: county Østfold on 22nd July 1973.

Lesser Golden Plover *Pluvialis dominica*

FINLAND Third and fourth records (*P. d. fulva*): first-winters in Lappeenranta on 20th September* and at Jurmo birdstation during 22nd-25th September*.

Sociable Plover *Chettusia gregaria* NETHERLANDS Recent increase: records in 1925, 1961 and 1968, then nine since 1974, including singles in April and September 1979 (cf. in Britain, five up to 1957, seven during 1958-70 and ten during 1971-78). SPAIN Rosas, Gerona, on 4th April.

Least Sandpiper *Calidris minutilla* GERMAN FEDERAL REPUBLIC First record: 19th September to 3rd October 1978 (*Brit. Birds* 72: 277).

Pectoral Sandpiper *Calidris melanotos* BELGIUM Second record: Turnhout, Campine, 6th-16th October (*De Wielewaal* 45: 339-344). FINLAND Eighth record: Lappeenranta on 13th-14th July. SWITZERLAND Rhine Delta on 18th August and Kleinbörsingen during 20th September to 3rd October*.

Buff-breasted Sandpiper *Tryngites subruficollis* NORWAY Third, fourth and fifth records: county Rogaland during 26th-28th September 1978 and 24th-30th July 1979, and county Akershus on 22nd September (cf. total in Britain and Ireland of 334 up to 1978).

Lesser Yellowlegs *Tringa flavipes* NORWAY Second record: county Rogaland during 5th-8th June.

Spotted Sandpiper *Actitis macularia* SPAIN First record: Delta del Ebro during 20th-23rd August.

Wilson's Phalarope *Phalaropus tricolor* BELGIUM First record: at Zandvliet, near Antwerpen on 4th June*.

Arctic Skua *Stercorarius parasiticus* SPAIN First record from central Spain: immature drowned in reservoir of Garcia Sola, Badajoz, on 22nd September 1978 (cf. high numbers in Denmark in autumn 1978, *Brit. Birds* 71: 584).

Great Black-headed Gull *Larus ichthyaetus* FRANCE Delete winter 1978/79 record (*Brit. Birds* 72: 591): actually Iceland Gull *L. glaucoides*. NETHERLANDS Third record: sub-adult at Scheveningen, Zuid-Holland, on 21st July.

Mediterranean Gull *Larus melanocephalus* BELGIUM Breeding (one pure pair and two mixed pairs with Black-headed *L. ridibundus*) at Zwin Reserve, Knokke, in 1979*. FRANCE Increasingly frequent in Brittany, tens of records in 1979, including 10-15 in summer

at Douarnenez Harbour, NORWAY First and second records: at oil-platform in Norwegian 'Ekofisk' field on 11th April and in county Akershus on 30th May. (Cf. breeding in Austria and Italy, and increased frequency in Poland, *Brit. Birds* 71: 584; 72: 278.)

Franklin's Gull *Larus pipixcan* NORWAY First record: two at Röst, county Nordland, during 16th-17th June.

Sabine's Gull *Larus sabini* SPAIN Unusually high numbers on Cantabrian coast from mid September to December.

Glaucous Gull *Larus hyperboreus* AUSTRIA Sixth record: second-winter on Wörthersee and on River Drau near Villach, Carinthia, from late January to late March (cf. second Swiss record, December 1978-February 1979, *Brit. Birds* 72: 278). FRANCE First summering records: three or four immatures in Douarnenez Harbour, Brittany, in July-August 1976-79.

Ivory Gull *Pagophila eburnea* DENMARK Fourth record: west Jutland on 13th January*; third was in 1966.

Sandwich Tern *Sterna sandvicensis* NETHERLANDS First record of North and Central American race *S. s. acyflavidus*: ringed as nestling at Cape Lookout, North Carolina, USA, on 23rd June 1978 and found dead near Veera, Zeeland, on 23rd December 1978.

Roseate Tern *Sterna dougallii* BELGIUM Mixed pair with Common *S. hirundo* at Zwin Reserve, Knokke, in 1979*, as in 1976 and 1978 (*Brit. Birds* 72: 278).

Black Tern *Chlidonias niger* AUSTRIA High spring numbers: close to 1,000 at Lange Lacke on 16th May (usual maxima rarely over 200). NETHERLANDS High autumn numbers: about 50,000 in IJsselmeer district in August 1979.

White-winged Black Tern *Chlidonias leucopterus* AUSTRIA Largest ever flock: over 100 at Lange Lacke on 16th May (see also Black Tern).

Rufous Turtle Dove *Streptopelia orientalis* NORWAY Third record (second of nominate race): county Nord-Trøndelag during 21st February to 20th March 1978.

Yellow-billed Cuckoo *Coccyzus americanus* NORWAY First record: county Rogaland on 7th October 1978.

Barn Owl *Tyto alba* BULGARIA First breeding record: pair with two fledglings in old building near Lake Atanasovo on 15th October.

Eagle Owl *Bubo bubo* NETHERLANDS Indi-

vidual near Den Helder, Noord-Holland, from October 1973 to at least winter 1979/80 (see also *Dutch Birding* 1: 61).

Short-eared Owl *Asio flammeus* CZECHOSLOVAKIA Exceptional breeding concentration in pond region of southern Bohemia in 1978: probably at least 23 breeding pairs, of which 18 nests found (complete clutches in nine nests were 5, 6, 7, 7, 7, 8, 8, 9 and 9); high numbers of small rodents present; previous instance of mass breeding was in southern Bohemia in 1937 (cf. high breeding numbers in Sweden in 1978, *Brit. Birds* 71: 584). DENMARK Several pairs breeding in 1979 (normally only one or two).

Tengmalm's Owl *Aegolius funereus* NETHERLANDS Since first record (of a first-year) in 1971, recorded annually since 1973 at several localities in province of Drenthe; breeding confirmed in 1977 (see also *Dutch Birding* 1: 62-65).

Bee-eater *Merops apiaster* AUSTRIA All but one of 1978 breeding sites (see *Brit. Birds* 71: 585) again occupied in 1979; two, abandoned for years, re-colonised.

Shore Lark *Eremophila alpestris* SWITZERLAND Correction: delete erroneous record (*Brit. Birds* 72: 591) created by transcription error, for which we apologise.

Citrine Wagtail *Motacilla citreola* FINLAND Eighth record: Säppi birdstation during 21st September to 1st October*; previous seven records during 1973-78.

Waxwing *Bombycilla garrulus* NORWAY Small invasion—more than in previous two years—in south in autumn 1979.

Red-flanked Bluetail *Tarsiger cyanurus* NORWAY First record: male in county Finnmark on 31st May 1969, recently accepted, so 1977 and 1978 records (*Brit. Birds* 72: 592) become the second and third.

Isabelline Wheatear *Oenanthe isabellina* FINLAND Second record: Joensuu during 30th April to 2nd May*. NORWAY First record: Utsira, county Rogaland, during 29th September to 18th October 1977. (Cf. Britain's second and third records, in May 1977 and October 1979, *Brit. Birds* 72: 534; 73: 49.).

Pied Wheatear *Oenanthe pleschanka* FINLAND First record: Lågskärs birdstation on 19th October*.

Black-eared Wheatear *Oenanthe hispanica* NORWAY Second record: male of eastern race *O. h. melanoleuca*, Utsira, county Rogaland, during 7th-9th October 1977.

Eye-browed Thrush *Turdus obscurus* NORWAY Second record: county Nord-Trøndelag

on 29th December 1978 (cf. second Dutch record, in April 1977, first and second Finnish records, in spring 1978, and fourth British record, in October 1978, *Brit. Birds* 71: 585; 72: 279-280, 535).

Fieldfare *Turdus pilaris* ROMANIA Expansion of breeding range: nesting first ten years ago in eastern Carpathians, then in northwest; in summer 1979, two pairs at Stupini, near Brasov (cf. range expansion in Austria, France, the Low Countries and Yugoslavia, *Brit. Birds* 71: 256, 585; 72: 280, 592).

River Warbler *Locustella fluviatilis* DENMARK Seven in Zealand during 24th May to 4th June* (usually only one or two per year).

Savi's Warbler *Locustella luscinioides* NORWAY Third record: singing, county Vest-Agder during 30th May to 16th June 1979 (cf. colonisation of Latvian SSR since first in 1970 and Estonian SSR just prior to 1977, and increase in Sweden in 1979, *Brit. Birds* 71: 256; 72: 592).

Booted Warbler *Hippolais caligata* NORWAY First record: Utsira, county Rogaland, on 6th October 1978.

Melodious Warbler *Hippolais polyglotta* NETHERLANDS Third, fourth and fifth records: singing at Vlagtwedde, Groningen, during 12th June to 12th July, and ringed at Avenhorn, Noord-Holland, on 8th July and at Knardijk, Flevoland, on 2nd September (cf. colonisation in canton of Geneva, Switzerland, in 1977, and first Swedish record, in 1978, *Brit. Birds* 70: 496; 72: 592).

Sardinian Warbler *Sylvia melanocephala* AUSTRIA Third record: male at Gmunden, Upper Austria, on 5th May.

Radde's Warbler *Phylloscopus schwarzi* FINLAND Second record: Säppi on 27th September.

Collared Flycatcher *Ficedula albicollis* NORWAY Second and third records: male in county Hordaland during 10th-17th May 1978, and second-summer male at Store Faerder observatory, county Vestfold, on 22nd May 1979, which had been ringed as nestling on Gotland, Sweden, in summer 1978 (cf. influx to Denmark in April 1978, *Brit. Birds* 71: 586).

Long-tailed Tit *Aegithalos caudatus* LATVIAN SSR None even seen at fieldstation Pape in autumn 1979 (55-2,246 trapped annually during 1968-78).

Correspondents

AUSTRIA Peter Prokop, Österreichische Gesellschaft für Vogelkunde, c/o Naturhistorisches Museum Wien, A-1014 Wien 1, Burgring 7, Postfach 417

Golden Oriole *Oriolus oriolus* NORWAY First breeding record: county Vestfold in June 1972.

Red-backed Shrike *Lanius collurio* SWITZERLAND In study area of 55 km² in west Berne Oberland, decrease from 91 pairs in 1978 to no more than 76 pairs in 1979, attributed to poor breeding success in 1978; breeding success excellent in 1979.

Siberian Jay *Perisoreus infaustus* BELGIUM First record (perhaps escape): Zevergem on 21st-23rd November* (per Jan Pollet).

Rook *Corvus frugilegus* AUSTRIA Two newly discovered colonies (both extant for at least two years) in Burgenland bring total of known rookeries to 11, only one of which is north of River Danube.

Common Waxbill *Estrilda astrild* PORTUGAL Range expanding to north; now seen near Porto.

Two-barred Crossbill *Loxia leucoptera* DENMARK Small irruption: a number of sightings from late August to early September (cf. observations in Finland and Sweden in autumn 1979, *Brit. Birds* 72: 592).

Scarlet Rosefinch *Carpodacus erythrinus* SWITZERLAND Adult male singing, Le Prese, Puschlav, during 11th-13th June (cf. expansion of breeding range or spring/summer records in Austria, France, Belgium and Yugoslavia, *Brit. Birds* 71: 586; 72: 280, 592).

Bullfinch *Pyrrhula pyrrhula* NORWAY Large invasion in south in autumn 1979 (previous large invasion in autumn 1976).

Rustic Bunting *Emberiza rustica* MALTA Tenth record: Gozo in November. YUGOSLAVIA First record since 1846: near Ljubljana on 22nd November. (Cf. range expansion in Sweden and first breeding in Estonian SSR, *Brit. Birds* 71: 587; 72: 280, 592-593).

Black-headed Bunting *Emberiza melanocephala* ROMANIA Breeding range expanding, but remains extremely rare; male observed near Techirghiol Lacke, Dobrogea, for several days from 8th July.

Rose-breasted Grosbeak *Pheucticus ludovicianus* NORWAY First and second records: at Utsira, county Rogaland, adult male during 13th-19th May 1977 and first-winter male on 1st October 1977.

Yellow-headed Blackbird *Xanthocephalus xanthocephalus* NORWAY First record: county Sör-Tröndelag on 30th May.

- BELGIUM René de Liedekerke & Drs F. L. L. Tombeur, c/o L'Agaric, 5371-Pailhe
 BULGARIA Dr Tanyu Michev, Research and Coordination Centre for Preservation and Restoration of the Environment, Gagarin Street 2, Sofia 13
 CZECHOSLOVAKIA Dr Karel Štastný, Institute of Landscape Ecology, Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences, Bezručova 927, 251 01 Říčany
 DENMARK Lasse Braae, Astershaven 245, DK 2760 Måløv
 FAEROE ISLANDS Dorete Bloch, J. C. Svabosgota 7, DK-3800 Tórshavn
 FINLAND Kalevi Hyytiä, Itäranta 40C 15, 41160 Tikkakoski
 FRANCE Philippe Dubois, 36 rue d'Angivillier, 78000 Versailles
 GERMAN FEDERAL REPUBLIC Alistair Hill, Dachverband Deutscher Avifaunisten, Bundesdeutscher Seltenheitausschuss, Albrecht-Haushofer-Str. 10, 3200 Hildesheim
 LATVIAN SSR J. Baumanis, Laboratory of Ornithology, Salaspils, Miera 3
 MALTA Joe Sultana & Charles Gauci, The Ornithological Society, PO Box 498, Valletta
 NETHERLANDS C. J. G. Scharringa, Trompenburg 15, 1852 CB Heiloo
 NORWAY Geoffrey Acklam, Nordliveien 18, 1320 Stabekk
 PORTUGAL Nuno Gomes Oliveira, Portuguese Center for Wildlife Study and Protection, Rua de Boa Hora, 85 R/C E, 4000 Porto
 ROMANIA Dr Victor Ciochia, Str Pavilioanele CFR nr 30, R2200 Brasov
 SPAIN Dr F. J. Purroy, Cátedra de Zoología, Facultad de Biología, León
 SWITZERLAND Dr Raffael Winkler, Schweizerische Vogelwarte, CH-6204 Sempach
 YUGOSLAVIA Iztok Geister, YU-64202 Naklo 246

Mystery photographs



42 The compound effect of slender bill, rounded head-profile and relatively large eye gives last month's mystery gull (plates 132 & 133, page 227, repeated here at reduced size) a jizz which instantly narrows the choice to one of the smallest species.

Taking size and the all-dark bill alone into consideration, the possibilities are Franklin's *Larus pipixcan*, Little *L. minutus*, Bonaparte's *L. philadelphia* or Ross's Gulls *Rhodostethia rosea*, but examination of plumage and structure



147. Mystery photograph 43. Identify the species. Answer next month

quickly reduces this list: paleness of mantle, slender, straight, relatively long bill and, especially, lack of the distinctive half-hood with thick white crescents above and below the eye of its immature and winter plumages are the main points which rule out Franklin's (see *Brit. Birds* 72: 176-182); black cap and lack of extensive white on the leading edge of the outer wing (similar to that on Black-headed Gull *L. ridibundus*) are the main characters which eliminate Bonaparte's (see *Brit. Birds* 71: 165-169); square-cut (not wedge-shaped) end of the tail, rather long (not short and stubby) bill, black cap and thin dark bar on secondaries rule out Ross's, which has all-white secondaries in its first year and, at most, no more than a pale grey crown. Photographs of first-summer Ross's with adult-type head pattern (*Brit. Birds* 67: plate 64) make a useful comparison. Thus, all but Little Gull are eliminated, and the combination of plumage patterns and structure support identification as a first-year of that species.

For the answer to last month's rider—'What is the approximate age in months of this individual?'—knowledge of the three basic 'rules' of gull plumages is required. First, gulls have two moults annually: a spring moult of head, body and a few inner wing feathers, and a complete moult which commences on adults near the end of the breeding season, or one or two months earlier on immatures; juveniles, however, moult only the head and body feathers in their first autumn, retaining wing and tail feathers until about one year old; Franklin's (possibly a complete moult twice yearly) and Sabine's Gulls *L. sabini* (complete moult in spring and a partial one in autumn) are exceptions. Secondly, wing and tail feathers, because they are renewed only once yearly, are especially subject to wear and fading: white tips and fringes are particularly prone, and usually disappear completely, and the brown and greyish areas on the wings of immatures, especially first-years, fade considerably. Thirdly, as a general rule, small gulls acquire adult-like plumages after their first complete autumn moult (when about one year old), medium-sized gulls after their second complete autumn moult (when about two years old), and large gulls after their third complete

autumn moult (when about three years old) or subsequently. These facts are an essential basis for understanding the complex array of gull plumages met with in the field.

On this mystery bird, the primaries, secondaries and greater coverts are very worn and ragged, and the wing pattern is a highly faded version of the clean, sharp pattern shown on the same feathers by fresh-plumaged juveniles and first-winters: this amount of wear and fading is consistent with an individual more than six months old. The fluffy look of the nape and the obvious gaps in the scapulars indicate active head and body moult, and it is clear that it is nearing the end of its partial spring moult from first-winter to first-summer plumage. Knowledge of the effects of wear and fading and the timing and extent of moults thus allow an estimate of the bird's age to be narrowed to ten or 11 months. It was photographed by E. C. Fellowes in Spain in May 1979.

PJG

Notes

Flight characteristics of Madeiran Petrel Dr M. P. Harris and Dr K. E. L. Simmons (*BWP* 1: 174-176) regarded the flight action of the Madeiran Petrel *Oceanodroma castro* as its best field character: 'intermediate between rapid, rather bounding and erratic flight of [Leach's Petrel *Oceanodroma*] *leucorhoa*, and fluttering flight of [Storm Petrel] *Hydrobates pelagicus*, being typically fairly steady with even, rather high beats interspersed with glides on wings bowed below horizontal.' Dr W. R. P. Bourne (*The Handbook of North American Birds* 1: 236-237) made the same point, adding that it 'does not skim water and patter as freely as Wilson's [Petrel *Oceanites oceanicus*].' The purpose of this note is to describe the Madeiran's flight and draw attention to a characteristic which is apparently not shared by the other three species.

I watched Madeiran and Leach's Petrels during an oceanographic cruise off Senegal, West Africa, in early 1976 (Brown 1979), and am familiar with Leach's and Wilson's from many cruises off eastern Canada. The Leach's off Senegal had the flight characteristics described by *BWP*, Boswall (1979) and Atkin (1979): bounding vertically and erratically from side-to-side in flapping flight; holding the carpal joints higher than the rest of the wings when gliding to give a silhouette like a flattened M; holding the wing high above the back, in a tern-like posture, at the start of the deep, slow down-beat. (Atkin's plates 184 & 185, though of 'pattering' birds, illustrate the last two points very well.) The Madeirans, by contrast, flew with a faster, shallower wing-beat; when gliding, they did so on wings held more or less flat; the tern-like wing posture appeared only occasionally, when they were banking for a down-wind glide. There was no vertical bounding during flapping flight, but they flew in *regular horizontal zigzags*: banked to the left for half a dozen beats, banked to the right for half a dozen beats, and



so on. This was very different from the erratic flight of Leach's. I was not able to confirm the identity of the birds with this flight action in the hand, but the only alternative in that area and season, apart from Leach's, is the Storm Petrel; my birds were too large, and lacked the fluttering flight and white underwing-bar of that species.

I suspect that Madeirans are more likely to be confused with Wilson's Petrels than with Leach's. Wilson's, like the Madeiran but unlike Leach's, is a relatively short-winged storm-petrel with a white rump patch which extends well onto the flanks; as Boswall (1979) pointed out, such often-quoted field characters as Wilson's Petrel's square tail, yellow webs and feet which extend beyond the tail—which in theory separate it from both the Madeiran and Leach's—are seldom apparent at sea. As *BWP* and Boswall have described, Wilson's has a skimming flight with its wings held more or less flat, and with a shallow beat in which the wing is never held high in a tern-like posture. There is no vertical bounding. On the other hand, while Wilson's may veer erratically from side to side, it does *not* show the regular, banking zigzagging which to my eye is characteristic of Madeiran. I have identified the latter only once outside Senegal waters—off Ecuador in December 1977—and the location, size and general appearance of this bird were all consistent with Madeiran Petrel.

R. G. B. BROWN

Canadian Wildlife Service, Bedford Institute of Oceanography, Dartmouth, Nova Scotia, Canada

REFERENCES

- ATKIN, K. 1979. Flight characters of Leach's Petrel. *Brit. Birds* 72: 334-336.
 BOSWALL, J. 1979. Flight characters of Wilson's Petrel. *Brit. Birds* 72: 330-334, 386.
 BROWN, R. G. B. 1979. Seabirds of the Senegal upwelling and adjacent waters. *Ibis* 121: 283-292.

Autumn Roseate Terns without tail streamers On 3rd September 1974, at St Ives, Cornwall, 70 adult Roseate Terns *Sterna dougallii* passed close inshore during the course of the day. Not one possessed outer tail feathers. On other occasions, smaller numbers have been recorded without tail streamers. There are two possible explanations. First, the tail streamers are particularly liable to break off; this would, however, result in a rather uneven effect, but those terns without these feathers have always shown no sign of either streamer. Secondly, Roseate Terns may have an earlier tail moult sequence than other terns, some individuals starting this while still in Europe. The point is, however, that Roseate Terns can occur in autumn without tail streamers.

V. R. FUCKER

Periglis, 4 Clovelly View, Turnchapel, Plymouth

Roller using 'anvil' to open snail shell From 12th to 14th September 1968, at Prawle Point, Devon, an adult Roller *Coracias garrulus* spent much of its time working up and down a line of telegraph wires, making forays down into fields to pick up food items. By 14th, it was spending the evenings hunting from the wires at one of their closest points to the road, about 400 m inland. That evening, T. F. Edwards and I watched it dive steeply from the wires to the ground, with half-open wings, and pick up what appeared to be

a small snail. After a few minutes, during which it seemed to be trying to break open the shell on the ground, the Roller flew about 6½ m and, several times in quick succession, smashed it against a projecting stone, breaking the shell open. I have found no reference to this behaviour in the literature, nor have I seen it repeated by Rollers on breeding grounds in southern Europe.

D. M. NORMAN

Top Flat, 66 Avenue Road, Torquay, Devon

Other observations of this interesting behaviour will be welcomed. Eds

Unusual roving flock of tits and other birds On 12th August 1978, at Coate Water, Swindon, Wiltshire, I watched a party of tits, warblers, Treecreepers *Certhia familiaris* and Chaffinches *Fringilla coelebs* feeding along a row of mature trees, mainly oaks *Quercus*. Many of the birds were calling and at least four Willow Warblers *Phylloscopus trochilus* were singing. I waited for the flock to reach a gap in the trees where there was also a dead hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna* and I counted and identified the birds as they flew by, some of them perching briefly in the hawthorn. The party consisted of about 25 Blue Tits *Parus caeruleus*, at least six Great Tits *P. major*, two Coal Tits *P. ater*, about 15 Long-tailed Tits *Aegithalos caudatus*, three Treecreepers, at least 20 Willow Warblers or Chiffchaffs *P. collybita*, four Lesser Whitethroats *Sylvia curruca*, two Garden Warblers *S. borin*, one Blackcap *S. atricapilla*, one Sedge Warbler *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus* and at least eight Chaffinches. The whole party of about 85-90 birds took about four minutes to pass the point at which I counted them.

STEPHEN B. EDWARDS

Hazeldene, Medbourne Lane, Liddington, Swindon, Wiltshire

This note, documenting an abnormally large and varied early-autumn roving flock, inspired the joint 'BB/YOC Roving Tit Flocks Project' (see page 267), which aims to study the sizes and composition of the normal autumn and winter roving flocks. Eds

Migrant Golden Oriole feeding on ground From 17th to 20th May 1977, an immature male Golden Oriole *Oriolus oriolus* was present at Portland Bird Observatory, Dorset. When trapped, on 17th, it dropped the larva of an oak egg moth *Lasiocampa quercus* in the catching box of the Heligoland trap. During the next two days, the oriole was observed to catch and eat a number of these larvae: it perched on low bushes, mainly bramble *Rubus*, and dropped on to them in the long grass beneath; it then skinned the larvae, holding them by the head and vigorously shaking their body or banging them against vegetation until the hairy outer skin was removed. On two occasions, it was also seen carrying large earthworms (Lumbricidae). According to *The Handbook*, the larvae of Lepidoptera have been recorded in the diet of the Golden Oriole, but very few species (notably the Cuckoo *Cuculus canorus*) will attempt to eat the large hairy larvae of oak eggmoths; earthworms, however, were not included in the species' diet. It is also most unusual for Golden Orioles to feed on the ground.

IAIN S. ROBERTSON

Bird Observatory, Fair Isle, Shetland

Fifty years ago . . .

'ROOKS COLLECTING RUBBER OBJECTS. The Rooks (*Corvus f. frugilegus*) of Wanstead Park have a strange custom which may not have been brought before the notice of readers of *British Birds*. For more than twenty years they have been in the habit of collecting rubber bands and scraps of articles made of rubber . . . portions of a child's balloon, a piece of bicycle tyre and an inch of rubber used for mending punctures. . . The reason of the partiality of these Rooks for rubber is an enigma. A. HIBBERT-WARE'. (*Brit. Birds* 24: 27, June 1930)

Diary dates

This list covers events taking place during July 1980 to June 1981. We welcome submission of details for possible inclusion in the next list, covering January to December 1981.

8th July BRITISH ORNITHOLOGISTS' CLUB. Richard Porter on 'Raptor migration in Europe and the Middle East'. Central London. Non-members should write (enclosing SAE) to hon. secretary, R. E. F. Peal, 2 Chestnut Lane, Sevenoaks, Kent TN13 3AR.

29th July-11th August SOCIETY OF WILDLIFE ARTISTS' ANNUAL EXHIBITION. The Mall Galleries, The Mall, London sw1. Open 10-5 Mon.-Fri.; 10-1 Sat.

23rd-30th August FIFTH PAN-AFRICAN ORNITHOLOGICAL CONGRESS. Lilongwe, Malawi. Details from Len Gillard, Executive Secretary, Fifth Pan-African Ornithological Congress, PO Box 84394, Greenside, Johannesburg 2034, South Africa.

16th September BOC. J. A. Hancock on his recent expedition to northern Argentine. Central London. Information from hon. secretary.

11th October RSPB SCOTTISH MEMBERS' DAY. Caledonian Hotel, Ayr. Full details from RSPB Conference Organiser, The Lodge, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 2DL.

18th October RSPB LONDON DAY & AGM. Kensington & Chelsea Town Hall. Full details from RSPB Conference Organiser.

24th-26th October SCOTTISH ORNITHOLOGISTS' CLUB ANNUAL CONFERENCE & AGM. Marine Hotel, North Berwick, East Lothian. Applications to Club Secretary, SOC, 21 Regent Terrace, Edinburgh EH7 5BT.

25th October RSPB WELSH MEMBERS' DAY. University College, Swansea. Full details from RSPB Conference Organiser.

26th-31st October BIRD CENSUS SYMPOSIUM. Asilomar Conference Grounds, near Monterey, California. 'Estimating populations of terrestrial birds'. Further information from Dr C. J. Ralph and Dr J. M. Scott, Bird Census Symposium, PO Box 43, Hawaii Volcanoes National Park, Hawaii 96718.

1st November RSPB EAST ANGLIA MEMBERS' DAY. Dukes Head Hotel, King's Lynn. Full details from RSPB Conference Organiser.

8th October BOU AUTUMN SCIENTIFIC MEETING. British Museum (Natural History). 'Bird vocalisation' (with BBC Natural History Unit and BLOWS). Applications to BOU Office, c/o Zoological Society of London, Regent's Park, London NW1 4RY.

28th-30th November BTO ANNUAL CONFERENCE & AGM. Hayes Conference Centre, Swanwick, Derbyshire. Applications to BTO, Beech Grove, Tring, Hertfordshire HP23 5NR.

28th-30th November NATIONAL EXHIBITION OF CAGE AND AVIARY BIRDS. Alexandra Palace.

9th-11th January BTO RINGING AND MIGRATION CONFERENCE.

27th-29th March RSPB MEMBERS' WEEKEND. University of York. Full details from RSPB Conference Organiser.

27th-30th March BOU ANNUAL CONFERENCE. Glasgow. 'Ornithology in Scotland'. Excursion to Islay. Applications to Meetings Secretary, BOU.

28th May (provisional) THE WILDFOWL TRUST AGM.

Requests

Colour-marked Grey Herons During summer 1980, nestling Grey Herons *Ardea cinerea* in the Camargue, France, will be marked with spots of coloured dye in up to three positions on the white feathers of the neck, and on the feathers of the leg. Details of sightings, including date, locality, colour and exact positions of dye-spots (please sketch), will be gratefully received and acknowledged by M. E. Moser, Station Biologique de la Tour du Valat, Le Sambuc, 13200 Arles, France.



YOC/BB Roving Tit Flocks Project Every British and Irish birdwatcher is familiar with the wandering bands of tits *Parus* and Long-tailed Tits *Aegithalos caudatus* which enliven woodland and farmland in autumn and winter (e.g. the unusually large and varied flock noted on page 265). Strangely, however, there seems to have been no detailed study ever made of the normal size of these flocks or of the proportions of species within them (and how these variables change with habitat and season).

During the coming autumn and winter, *British Birds* will be running a joint project with the Young Ornithologists' Club, to determine the numbers and composition of roving tit flocks, including any other associated species. Field observations will be during the period 1st August 1980 to 28th February 1981. The survey will be restricted to woodland and farmland (garden observations are not required, to avoid the bias produced by bird-tables and nut-baskets).

Anyone observing a roving flock of tits is asked to:

- (1) note the species comprising the flock: there may be Treecreepers *Certhia familiaris*, Goldcrests *Regulus regulus*, warblers (Sylviidae) and finches (Fringillidae), for example, as well as tits
- (2) note the numbers of each species
- (3) categorise the habitat simply as either (a) mainly coniferous woodland, (b) mainly deciduous woodland, or (c) hedgerow
- (4) record the county in which the observation was made
- (5) give the date of the observation

and send this information (preferably as a simple list, rather than as a letter), together with their name, address and age (if under 18) to the address at the end of this announcement. It would help if each observation of a different tit flock was submitted on a separate card or piece of paper.

Roving tit flocks are often noisy and easy to locate. They are less easy to count. We recommend that observers noting a roving flock should position themselves so that the birds in the flock can be identified and counted as they fly across a gap within woodland or in a hedge. The only real identification problem is likely to be Marsh *Parus palustris* and Willow Tits *P. montanus*. We recommend that observers record these merely as 'Marsh/Willow' unless they are absolutely certain of a specific identification, in which case their reasons must be stated in substantiation.

Dr C. M. Perrins, director of the Edward Grey Institute of Field Ornithology and author of the 'New Naturalist' *British Tits* (1979), has advised on the plans for this project and has agreed to act as consultant during the analysis of collected data. D. J. Fisher, activities organiser of the YOC, will be collating the results and writing a paper for *British Birds* and a short report for the YOC magazine *Birdlife*.

We hope that many *British Birds* readers, not just YOC members, will participate.

Lists on cards or sheets of paper should be submitted as soon as possible after 28th February 1981 and, in any case, before 31st March 1981, to: YOC/BB Project, *British Birds*, Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3NJ.

Lapland Buntings in autumn, winter and spring 1979/80 There is some evidence that unusually high numbers of Lapland Buntings *Calcarius lapponicus* overwintered on the English east coast during 1979/80. To assess the numbers and distribution, all records of Lapland Buntings in Britain and Ireland during the period September 1979 to May 1980 are requested. Details should be sent to John Cudworth, 17a Prospect Road, Ossett, West Yorkshire WF5 8AE.

Breeding bird records in Austria In preparation for a future atlas project, the Österreichische Gesellschaft für Vogelkunde would welcome notification of observations made in Austria (for past years as well as for 1980) by foreign ornithologists. All records, which will be acknowledged, should be sent to Peter Prokop, Secretary, Österreichische Gesellschaft für Vogelkunde, c/o Naturhistorisches Museum Wien, A-1014 Wien 1, Austria.

Viruses of seabirds To help continuing studies (see *Brit. Birds* 72: 242), please send live ticks from seabird colonies to Dr P. A. Nuttall, NERC, Institute of Virology, 5 South Parks Road, Oxford OX1 3UB.

News and comment

Peter Conder and Mike Everett

Eddie Watkinson (1915-1980) We were saddened to learn that Eddie died on 19th March 1980, aged 65, after a year-long fight against cancer. He will be remembered with affection and gratitude by many hundreds of birdwatchers from all over Europe and America who sought his help—always so freely given—when they visited Mallorca: it hardly seems possible that only seven years have passed since he moved to the island after retiring from his own motor business, which had occupied most of his adult life. From what had been only a minor interest in birds, started with the Scarborough Field Naturalists, he developed a deep love of his new home and an unrivalled knowledge of its birds. His *Guide to Birdwatching in Mallorca* was an instant success—and a minor classic of its kind—and to the very end of his life he was working on a revised edition. He will be missed by all who knew him, met him and corresponded with him: we extend our deepest sympathy to his wife Pat, who has said that she will do her best to help future visitors to Mallorca. Her address is Apto 72, Puerto Pollensa, Mallorca.

Dr Felix Rodriguez de la Fuente Only five days before Eddie Watkinson's death, Spain lost another leading naturalist: Juan Antonio Gonzales Morales writes that Dr Felix Rodriguez de la Fuente '... met his death in an accident in Alaska on Friday 14th March. He had just made a documentary film for Spanish Television on the wildlife of Canada and Alaska. Through television, radio and

the press Dr Rodriguez de la Fuente has done more towards promoting knowledge and conservation of wildlife in Spain than any other person in recent years, above all in the non-scientific field. From the most humble to the most cultured, he was admired by all in Spain.'

'Big Jake Calls the Waders' This is the title of a new and highly original bird identification disc/cassette. Twenty-eight of Britain's most familiar waders are featured, with an excellent commentary by Bryan Bland. The birds' songs and calls are, however, not made by the birds themselves but by 'Big Jake' Ward. As the accompanying booklet says: 'Just as an artist's representation in caricaturing the diagnostic features of a bird is more helpful than a photograph, these true-to-life but larger-than-life interpretations capture the "aural jizz" of each species.' There is no avoiding the fact that Big Jake's mimicry is astounding. The most successful parts of the recordings are those where the calls of several species are combined to give typical marshland medleys, with each species in turn coming to the fore: these are brilliant. If one has to level any criticism, it must be that the calls are sometimes too 'thin', lacking the 'body' and richness of actual wader calls: the birds are even better vocalists than Big Jake! This set of unique recordings is, however, well worth purchasing for its interest as well as its usefulness. I hope that others (perhaps covering the flight calls of finches and buntings or of a

selection of rare vagrants to Britain) will be forthcoming. *Big Jake Calls the Waders*, devised, produced and engineered by Alan Haven, is published by Millstream Records, Beach Road, Weybourne, Holt, Norfolk NR25 7SR, from whom it is available price £3.50 (record) or £3.75 (cassette), plus 50p package and posting in each case. [Contributed by JTRS]

Irish Conference The fourteenth All-Ireland Conference on Bird Conservation, organised by the IWC in conjunction with the RSPB, was held at the Talbot Hotel, Wexford, from 29th February to 2nd March 1980. Native conference-goers (who should know what they are talking about) were heard to say afterwards that it was a vintage conference—certainly the lectures were as good as they were varied. ME cannot of course comment on his own contribution—but perhaps his rendition of vocal duetting by the Barred Owl *Strix varia* may suggest a rival to Big Jake in the making? Malcolm Ogilvie gave a lucid account of the status of the Greenland Whitefront in Britain and Ireland, and many were surprised to hear that its numbers have declined considerably in recent decades. 'A study of seabirds on Great Saltce' by Clare Lloyd O'Nolan brought the sounds and smells of a seabird island right into the auditorium, while Bobby Smith's selection of bird-photographs and sound recordings from Scotland provided a close look at many familiar (and some not-so-familiar) species. Finally, Ciaran O'Keeffe succeeded in making his talk on the 'Beached Bird Survey' both fascinating and amusing, at a time when many people's minds were on their lunch, and others were thinking chiefly of the excellent goosing to be had on the nearby Slobs. The traditional bottle of champagne, awarded to the winner of the *British Birds* mystery photograph competition, was won by Killian Mullarney.

'Irish Birds' The third issue of this annual journal, published by the Irish Wildbird Conservancy and edited by C. D. Hutchinson, includes two papers of international importance. The first, a mammoth (71-page) paper by Major R. F. Ruttledge and M. A. Ogilvie, documents and discusses the past and current status in Ireland and Britain of the Greenland race of the White-fronted Goose *Anser albifrons flavirostris*. They estimate that, compared with the 1950s, numbers wintering in Ireland have declined by about 50%, while those in Britain have

risen by about 13%, the totals for the whole area being 17,500-23,000 in the 1950s and 14,300-16,600 now. The single most important reason for the Irish decline is given as loss of habitat, mainly of bogs, with shooting and disturbance having adverse effects, particularly where habitat loss has created concentrations of geese.

The second long paper is a detailed report by Michael O'Meara on the census of Corncrakes *Crex crex* undertaken in Ireland in 1978. Based on the 1,062 singing Corncrakes located in the census, the total Irish population is estimated to be certainly no more than 2,000 pairs and probably 1,200-1,500 pairs, compared with perhaps 4,000-5,000 pairs in the late 1960s. The reasons for the decline, which has taken place in Britain and Ireland since the late 19th century, remain obscure: no correlation was found between silage-making and decreases in Corncrake numbers.

Other papers concern the Capercaillie *Tetrao urogallus* as—or, rather, as not—an Irish species (an object lesson to those authors of avifaunas who do not thoroughly follow through their references); auks (Alcidae) trapped in salmon drift-nets; and the breeding by Short-eared Owls *Asio flammeus* in southwest Ireland (within the range of the recently introduced bank vole *Clethrionomys glareolus*). With short notes, reviews and the twenty-sixth 'Irish Bird Report', compiled by K. Preston and covering 1978, this third issue of *Irish Birds* is as good value for money, at £1.75, as were the first two. It is available from W. J. O'Flynn, Ballintubbrid, Carrigtwohill, Co. Cork, Ireland. [Contributed by JTRS]

'Continental Birdlife' The continent is that of North America, and this is a new bird journal—always welcome—of which the first three issues (February, April and June 1979) have just reached us. The slim issues (average 28 pages) concentrate on identification and rarity records; as yet, no species or group especially relevant to European birders has been covered, but the style, format and competence of the contributions suggest that in due course we shall be wanting to refer to this journal. An editorial (1: 24) noted that 'we shamelessly lifted a number of ideas from *British Birds* (probably the world's finest popular bird journal) . . .'. *BB* readers will recognise our 'Mystery photographs' renamed as 'Snap Judgment' (number 2 was even a Curlew Sandpiper and a Dunlin in the same photograph, cf *Brit. Birds* 72: 326, 384-

385) and our 'Recent reports' renamed (aptly?) as 'Latest Rumors'. The subscription is \$10.50, payable to Continental Bird-life Inc., PO Box 43294, Tucson, Arizona 85733, USA. [Contributed by JTRS]

Herts. birds The 1978 Herts. bird report—*Birds in Hertfordshire 1978*—is now available, and appearing alongside it is a new booklet

The Species of Birds Recorded in Hertfordshire: the latter is by Bryan Sage and brings up to date *A History of the Birds of Hertfordshire* written by him in 1959 and now out-of-print. The booklets are sold only together, at an inclusive price of 70p post free; they are obtainable from the Hertfordshire Natural History Society, 6 Castle Hill, Berkhamsted, Hertfordshire.

Opinions expressed in this feature are not necessarily those of the editors of British Birds

Recent reports

R. A. Hume and K. Allsopp

These are largely unchecked reports, not authenticated records

This report covers March and, unless otherwise stated, all dates refer to that month.

After the mild February weather, more wintry conditions developed during March, but too late to cause much change in the bird populations. During the first two weeks, west to northwest winds predominated, aiding the departure of the winter visitors. From 15th, however, an anticyclone developed over Scandinavia, bringing very cold easterly conditions which inhibited any arrivals from the south. This weather persisted until 25th, when an Atlantic cyclone managed to bring milder, but wet, southwesterly weather across the country, with persistent cloud cover associated with the slow-moving frontal troughs. The numbers of spring migrants were consequently small: **Wheat-ears** *Oenanthe oenanthe* appeared at Portland Bill (Dorset) on 9th, but they remained thin on the ground throughout the month; not until the end were **Chiffchaffs** *Phylloscopus collybita* heard at their breeding sites, and **Ring Ouzels** *Turdus torquatus* seen on passage. Two of these last were accompanied by a **Richard's Pipit** *Anthus novaeseelandiae* at Winterton (Norfolk) on 30th.

Wading birds

Some movement was observed among the waders. **Stone-curlews** *Burhinus oedinemus* had returned to the Brecks (Norfolk/Suffolk) by 7th, and 60 **Avocets** *Recurvirostra avosetta* to Minsmere (Suffolk) by 30th, and a **Whimbrel** *Numenius phaeopus* was seen at Horsey (Norfolk) on 15th. Two Nearctic species were also reported: a **dowitcher** *Limnodromus* at Old Hall Marsh (Essex) on 22nd and a **Lesser Yellowlegs** *Tringa flavipes* at Fraserburgh (Grampian) on 16th. **Kentish Plovers** *Charadrius alexandrinus* appeared at Cley (Norfolk) and Dungeness (Kent) in

early April. The presence of three wintering **Cranes** *Grus grus* was revealed on 1st at



Horsey, where they stayed throughout the month, and a **Little Egret** *Egretta garzetta* was reported from Kingsbridge (Devon) from 24th.

Raptors

Rough-legged Buzzards *Buteo lagopus* were seen periodically at Walberswick (Suffolk) throughout the month, but perhaps more uncommon were five **Buzzards** *B. buteo* on 30th, and, on the same day, a **Goshawk** *Accipiter gentilis* at nearby Minsmere. Again on 30th, a very early **Honey Buzzard** *Pernis apivorus* appeared at Kingsbridge, where a **Red Kite** *Milvus milvus* had been sighted the previous day. An earlier report of this species came from Cley (Norfolk) on 15th. **Peregrines** *Falco peregrinus* are not common in East Anglia, so that reports from Walberswick on 15th and Sheringham on 20th suggest that these birds were held up by the weather when returning to the Continent. A **Gyr Falcon** *F. rusticolus* came aboard the weather ship *Lima* at 57°N 20°W on 13th March and stayed until 16th.

Seabirds

Little Auks *Alle alle* were still being reported in singles around the English east and south coasts after the winter's influx. A blue-phase **Fulmar** *Fulmarus glacialis* and a **Storm Petrel** *Hydrobates pelagicus* were both reported at Sheringham (Norfolk) on 20th, and **Great Skuas** *Stercorarius skua* had returned to Shetland by the end of the month. A party of about 120 **Kittiwakes** *Rissa tridactyla* inland at Church Wilne Reservoir (Derbyshire) was an unusual sight. **Common** *Sterna hirundo* and **Sandwich Terns** *S. sandvicensis* began to appear along the English south coast, but the surprise find there was a **Forster's Tern** *S. forsteri* at Falmouth (Cornwall) on 9th, which stayed until 18th. This is a new bird for Britain and Ireland, but this Nearctic species had previously wandered to Iceland and was expected to appear here eventually. The **Ring-billed Gull** *Larus delawarensis* was probably overlooked for many years, but, since the first in 1973, has been reported regularly, the latest being one at Chew Valley Lake (Avon) on 20th. A further inland record of a **Mediterranean Gull** *L. melanocephalus*, a brief appearance of an adult on 1st April, came from Rutland Water (Leicestershire). A **Black-browed Albatross** *Diomedea melanophris* was seen from the weather ship *Lima* at 56° 21'N 14° 12'W on 16th March.

Waterfowl

No less than 52 **Slavonian Grebes** *Podiceps auritus* collected at Tollesbury (Essex) during the month, this flocking behaviour being a normal feature of their spring migration. Migrant **Garganeys** *Anas querquedula* were seen at Bough Beech Reservoir (Kent) and Kenfig Pool (West Glamorgan) on 9th, but there was no subsequent influx. An exciting record was of a drake **Bufflehead** *Bucephala*



albeola off South Uist (Western Isles) on 14th, the last accepted record being in 1961. Reports of **Surf Scoters** *Melanitta perspicillata* have been more numerous this winter, and yet another was seen at Golspie (Highland) in early April. **Ring-necked Ducks** *Aythya collaris* continue to be reported widely: one at Eyebrook Reservoir (Leicestershire) on 23rd, two at Slapton (Devon) on 24th and one in Shetland on 26th.

Long-stay vagrants

Finally, the **Two-barred Crossbill** *Loxia leucoptera* at Cannock Chase (Staffordshire) continued to put in an appearance until late in the month, and, near Wadebridge (Cornwall), the **Belted Kingfisher** *Ceryle alcyon* could still be found by those willing to search diligently.



Latest news

Late May/early June: in Norfolk, **Black-winged Stilt** *Himantopus himantopus* Hickling Broad (also Steart, Somerset), **Broad-billed Sandpiper** *Limicola falcinellus* and **Red-**

throated Pipit *Anthus cervinus* Breydon Water and **Caspian Tern** *Sterna caspia* Hickling; **Sooty Tern** *S. fuscata* Ditchford Gravel-pits (Northampton) and **Scops Owl** *Otus scops* Basingstoke (Hampshire).

Short reviews

Birds. By Althea. (Life-cycle Books series, Longman, Harlow, 1980. 24 pages; 13 colour illustrations. £1.75.) Suitable for parents to read to their three- to six-year-old children. **The Scottish Ospreys: from extinction to survival. By Philip Brown.** (Heinemann, London, 1979. 190 pages; 18 colour plates; 38 black-and-white plates; 4 line-drawings. £7.50.) 'The story of the extirpation of Ospreys from Scotland and then, as Dr George Waterston describes it in his foreword, 'the cloak and dagger' days 50 years later, when the RSPB was fighting the natural and human dangers facing the newly colourising Ospreys. Events since the 1950s are summarised by a table. **Birdwatcher at Large. By Bruce Campbell, with drawings by Donald Watson.** (Dent, London, Toronto & Melbourne, 1979. 272 pages; 21 line-drawings. £7.95.) Autobiography of the BTO's first secretary, who nowadays is perhaps best known as nature-journalist and broadcaster. His birds'-nesting (directed, when at school, towards his egg-collection, but subsequently towards data collection and ringing) has remained the dominant interest throughout his life and led to that classic book *Finding Nests* (1953) and its successor *A Field Guide to Birds' Nests* (1972), written jointly with James Ferguson-Lees. This book reflects his life's interest. **A Garland of Nightingales. By Hockley Clarke.** (Gordon & Cremonesi, London & New York, 1979. 120 pages; 8 illustrations. £8.50.) Companion book to this author's *Blackie & Co.* (1978, see review *Brit. Birds* 72: 127). Decorative garlands, clouds and singing birds border every page; the large-type brief text consists mainly of poetry and purple prose; expensive. **The Nesting Season: the bird photographs of Frederick Kent Truslow. Commentary by Helen G. Cruickshank.** (Elm Tree Books, London, 1979. 136 pages; many black-and-white and colour photographs. £15.00.) This book is really a vehicle for the photographs, many of which (especially those in colour) are superb, and the colour-reproduction, although somewhat variable, is usually also excellent. The cost is, however, high: if

bought for the colour photographs, the purchaser will be paying exactly 20p per picture. **A Hebridean Naturalist. By Peter Cunningham.** (Acair, Stornoway, 1979. 71 pages; seven black-and-white illustrations. Paperback £2.95.) Mostly about birds; enjoyment of birdwatching in the Western Isles, written with enthusiasm and flair for 'Nature notes' in the *Stornoway Gazette* and now reprinted as an attractive booklet. **Wildlife of Scotland. Edited by Fred Holliday.** (Macmillan, London, 1979. 198 pages; 115 colour plates; many black-and-white plates; some line-drawings. £8.95.) A beautifully produced, well-designed book, with some of the best photographic reproduction of any recent publication. With ten authors of the calibre of Dr David Jenkins and Dr Adam Watson, the texts are far more than the usual regurgitated generalisations which the book's title might suggest initially. Publication was aided by the Gulf Oil Corporation on behalf of the Scottish Wildlife Trust, and both bodies deserve commendation. Any naturalist with the slightest interest in the animals and plants of Scotland will want to own this book. **Border Reflections—chiefly on the arts of shooting and fishing. By Lord Home.** (Collins, London, 1979. 111 pages; several black-and-white illustrations. £4.95.) Entertaining light reading for anyone whose countryside interests are those noted in the book's subtitle. **Eric Hosking's Birds: fifty years of photographing wildlife. By Eric Hosking with Kevin MacDonnell.** (Pelham, London, 1979. 224 pages; 80 colour plates; over 200 black-and-white plates. £10.50.) Is there any bird-photographer—whether professional or budding—who would not wish to own this handsome volume of The Master's work? The text not only describes the circumstances in which many of the photographs were obtained, but is also full of useful tips. Recommended. **Rare and Endangered Biota of Florida: volume 2, Birds. Edited by Herbert W. Kale II.** (University Presses of Florida, Gainesville, 1979. 121 pages; 36 black-and-white photo-

graphs; 70 maps. Paperback, \$7.00). Red Data Books, started by the IUCN on a world basis, now multiply for smaller areas. This is an excellent example, though it extends beyond endangered and threatened species to those which are rare or of special concern in Florida. For 72 species, there are sections on range, habitat, life history and ecology, status and recommendations, with references, maps and photographs. Florida is deservedly popular with birdwatchers, and the British visitor will find this a useful guide to the rarer species: a mouth-watering list, which ranges from Wood Stork, Everglade Kite and Ivory-billed Woodpecker to Sandhill Crane, White-tailed Kite and Limpkin. It is to be hoped that its many sensible recommendations will be heeded in time. [SC] **Ornamental Waterfowl.** By **Hartmut Kolbe.** (Gresham Books, Old Woking, 1979. 258 pages; 86 colour plates; 42 black-and-white plates; over 100 distribution maps. £8.50). The odd mixture of birds in this book includes Little Egret, Moorhen, Crane, Oystercatcher and Black-headed Gull, as well as the expected swans, geese and ducks. Identification is dealt with minimally (and often badly); the photographs vary from excellent to very poor, some being not only apparently out of focus and reproduced with the wrong colour-tones, but also marked-up in such a way that the birds appear to be either swimming uphill or sliding down a ski-slope. **Lambert's Birds of Shore and Estuary.** Paintings by **Terence Lambert**; text by **Alan Mitchell.** (Collins, London, 1979. 127 pages; many colour illustrations and some black-and-white line-drawings. £6.95). Full-page painted colour portraits of some 50 common British species, with a few lines of text about each on the facing page. Alan Mitchell's brief word-portraits are entirely appropriate in the circumstances. Doubtless many bird-lovers will wish to buy this attractive-looking volume. For a coffee-table book—which is how it must be classed—it is relatively cheap, although also slim. The paintings are mostly (but not wholly) accurate, though somewhat wooden, in this respect often recalling the work of Raymond Ching by resembling the frozen motion of a photograph, rather than the actual motion of a moving creature. **The Seeing Eye: notes of a Highland naturalist.** By **John Lister-Kaye.** (Allen Lane, London, 1980. 275 pages; 29 black-and-white plates; several line-drawings. £7.95). Autobiographical account of the setting up of a nature study centre in the Scottish Highlands; exceedingly

well and interestingly written; excellent light reading. **Parrots: their care and breeding.** By **Rosemary Low.** (Blandford Press, Poole, 1980. 654 pages; 91 colour plates; 25 black-and-white plates. £22.00). Although the first one-fifth covers aspects of the aviculture of parrots, this book is devoted largely to species-by-species accounts of parrots of the world, usually under the headings 'range/habitat', 'description' and 'aviculture'. The colour-photographs are superb (as they should be, since captive birds are depicted), but cover less than one-third of the species. **Nature in the West Country.** By **S. A. Manning.** (World's Work Ltd, The Windmill Press, Tadworth, 1979. 160 pages; many black-and-white plates. Hardback £6.95, paperback £4.95). Somerset, Devon and Cornwall, competently described and illustrated by well reproduced photographs. Chapters on mammals, birds, amphibians and reptiles, butterflies, trees and shrubs and other plants vary from good to adequate, but the first two dozen pages—a compendium of interesting places in the three counties—are the most valuable. This book will be especially useful to visitors to southwestern England, particularly foreign tourists; local ornithologists will find little in it that they do not know already. **Das Rotkehlchen.** By **Rudolf Pätzold.** (Die Neue Brehm-Bücherei, Wittenberg Lutherstadt, 1979. 96 pages; 41 black-and-white photographs; 20 line-drawings. Paperback DM9.20). The Neue Brehm-Bücherei series continues apace—reaching number 520, which deals with the popular Robin, and, like its predecessors, covers the literature fully, with some original studies on nesting and the growth of young. [SC]. **Der Schwarzhalsstaucher.** By **Roland Prinzinger.** (Die Neue Brehm-Bücherei, Wittenberg Lutherstadt, 1979. 128 pages; 20 black-and-white plates; 37 line-drawings; 3 maps. Paperback DM13.40). Another monograph in an excellent series, this one covering the Black-necked Grebe. Text entirely in German. **British Birds: a field guide.** By **Alan J. Richards.** (David & Charles, Newton Abbot, 1979. 192 pages; many colour photographs and black-and-white line-drawings. £4.95). Yet another in the flood of books cashing in on the birdwatching boom. Although purporting to deal with 'all the species you are likely to see in Britain over the course of a year', Green Sandpiper and Wood Sandpiper are, for instance, each dismissed in only 30 words. Such limitations apart, the book is a success: most of Britain's

commonest birds are excellently illustrated by well-chosen colour photographs and a series of attractive black-and-white drawings by R. A. Hume. The book is clearly aimed at the absolute novice, who will find much of use and interest, despite its incompleteness. With comprehensive coverage, this could have been a really useful book: the publishers ought to be kicking themselves for missing this opportunity. **A Natural History of Britain and Ireland.** By Eric Simms, illustrated by Robert Gillmor. (Dent, London, Melbourne & Toronto, 1979, 258 pages; 15 line-drawings. £6.95.) This admirable book provides fascinating reading for everyone interested in the natural history of our islands. The title, however, is inappropriate, since this is very much a personal account, as the dust-jacket blurb says, of 'the differing landscapes of the British Isles through the eyes of one naturalist who has travelled widely and observantly through them'. Robert Gillmor's evocative vignettes head each of the 15 chapters, which are crammed with facts and reminiscences. The index is good, but this is a book for pleasure, rather than a work of reference. **How About Birdwatching?** By Val Singleton and Arthur Gilpin. (EP Publishing Ltd, Wakefield, 1979, 96 pages; 40 black-and-white plates; several line-drawings. Paperback £1.50.) The beginner gets sound advice presented in an interesting way by Val Singleton, but almost half of this small book is wasted on a badly designed and completely inadequate 'Fieldguide to the birds a beginner is most likely to encounter'. A complicated system of tiny symbols and a poor choice of typography lead to confusion and the texts are generally too brief or misleading or with the wrong emphasis, which is a pity, since the first one-third of the book provides valuable guidance for the novice. **Nordjyllands Fugle: deres yngleudbredelse og traekforhold.** By Poul Erik Sperling, Uffe Gjøel Sørensen and Anders Pape Møller. (Scandinavian Science Press Ltd, Klampenborg, 1978, 372 pages, 8 black-and-white plates, numerous maps, histograms and line-drawings. DKr140 plus postage). The birdlife of Salling, Mors, Thy, Hanherred, Vendsyssel and Himmerland: the northernmost tip of Jutland. Geology and landscape forms, hydrographical and marine-ecological conditions, the many islands, the different habitats, climate, migration routes over south Scandinavia, human activity and its effect on birdlife, and the history of

ornithology in North Jutland are covered in some detail. The systematic list, the main part of the book, deals with status, breeding range, migration, summer, winter, and changes in status going back to the 19th century; where relevant, topics such as taxonomy are included. The bibliography fills 20 pages. Sturdy, and excellently set out and produced; even non-Danish speakers will find the maps and histograms valuable for reference; a model. [DAVID A. CHRISTIE] **Wings over Wales.** By Gerald Summers. (Collins, London, 1979, 207 pages; several line-drawings. £6.50.) The author's personal experiences with 'Random', his Golden Eagle, 'Torquil', his Imperial Eagle, and various other captive raptors. **A Century of Bird Books.** By Peter Tate. (Witherby, London, 1979, 256 pages; 93 black-and-white plates. £10.50.) After selecting certain bird books and eminent ornithologists for special treatment in the first two-thirds, there are ten bibliographies under subject headings, listing the bird books published in Britain during the last 100 years. This was a gap in the ornithological literature and a book on this topic could have been very useful for reference. Unfortunately, the two parts of this book are not cross-referenced and there is no means of finding the detailed treatment of a book (nor of determining whether such a detailed treatment exists), without prolonged search. **Arctic Summer: birds in North Norway.** By Richard Vaughan. (Anthony Nelson, Shrewsbury, 1979, 152 pages; 7 colour plates; many black-and-white plates. £6.25.) If you like travelogues of bird expeditions, this is for you. The tale of a trip to the Varanger Peninsula in June-July 1972, profusely illustrated with the author's photographs, those in colour being especially good. The text—secondary to the photographic plates—is unjustified and has a wide left hand margin. **The Complete Birds of the World.** By Michael Walters. (David & Charles, Newton Abbot, 1980, 340 pages. £12.50.) Following the sequence of J. L. Peters's *Check List of the Birds of the World*, with subsequent revisions; scientific name, authority, an English vernacular name, distribution, habitat, food, nest-site, clutch-size, incubation details and fledging period are listed for every species of bird in the world. A helpful and well laid-out volume, but users should note that the English vernacular names—even those of some common European species—are not always those which are in general use in Britain.

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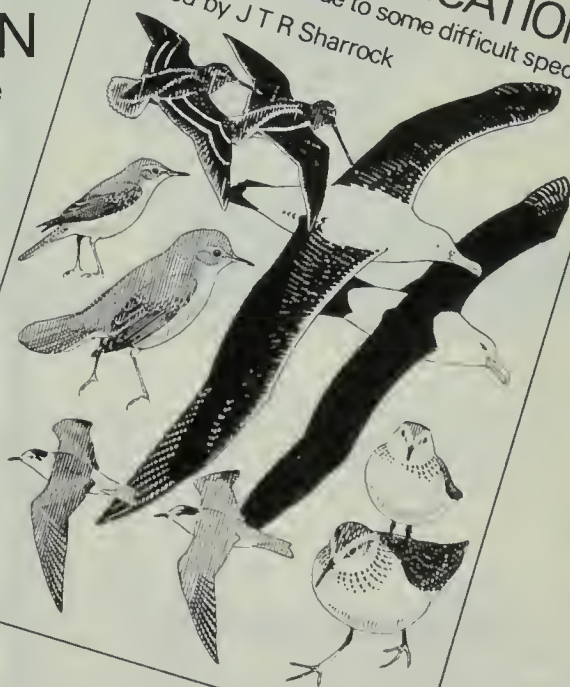
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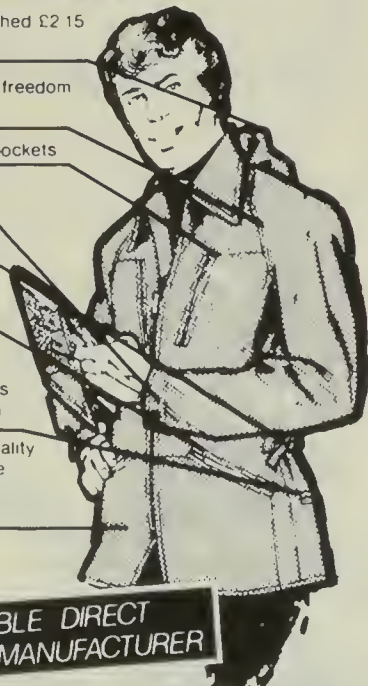
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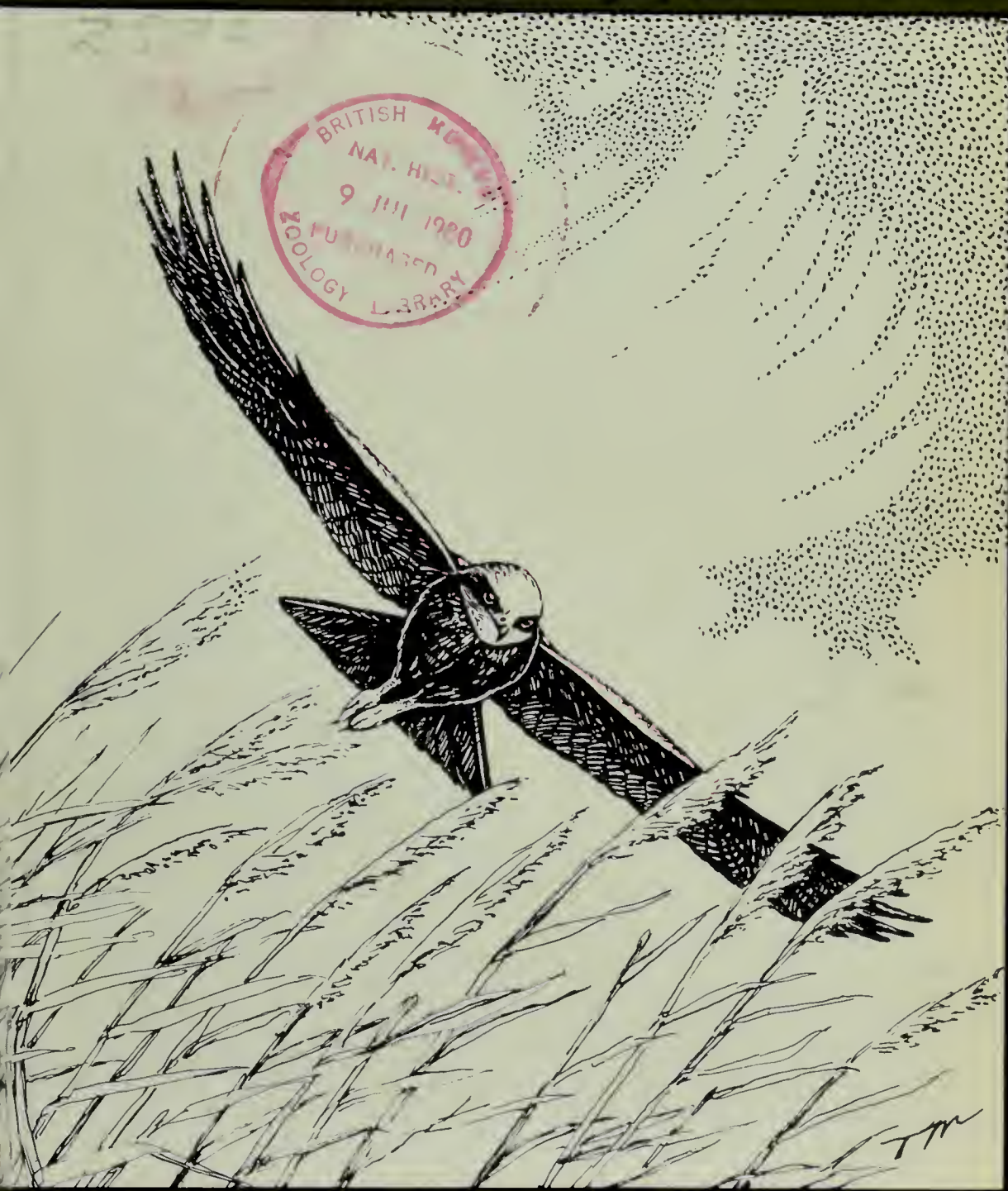
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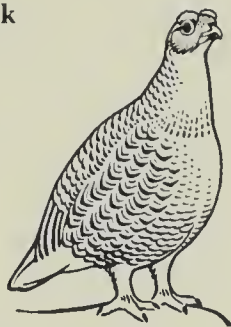
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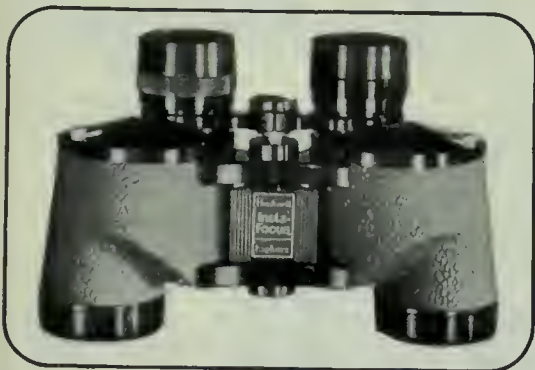
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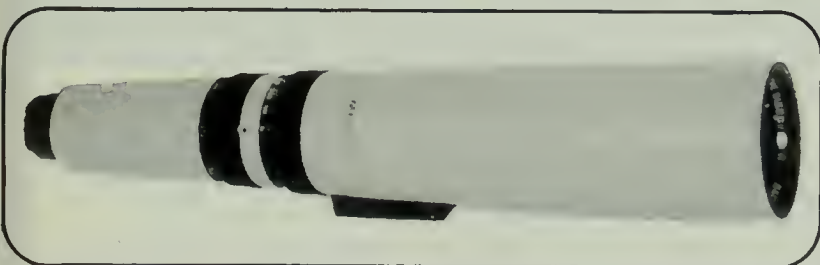
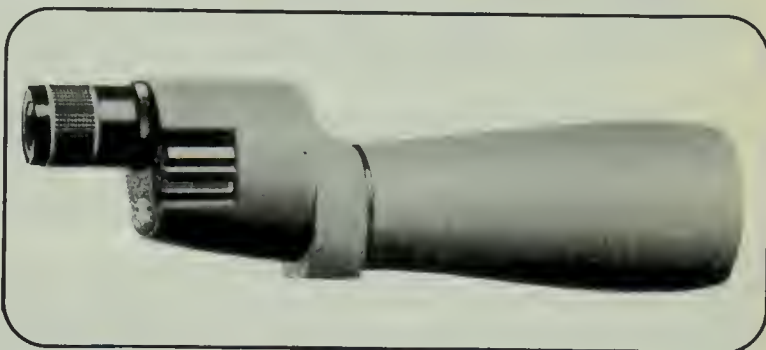
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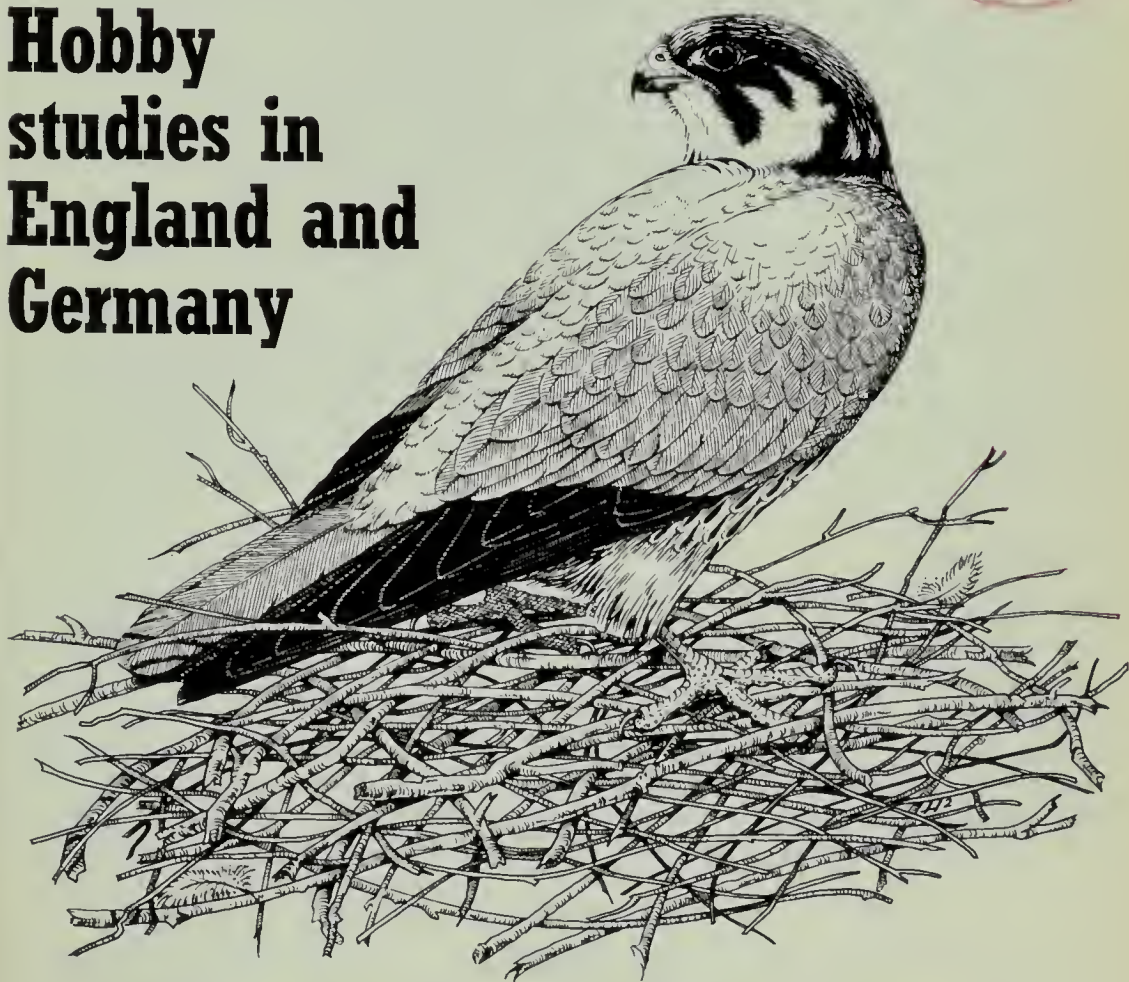
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Hobby studies in England and Germany



Dietrich Fiuczynski and Desmond Nethersole-Thompson

The agile Hobby is one of Europe's most attractive birds, yet, partly because of its rarity, one of the least studied

In England, the long, hot summer of 1976 was highly successful for the Hobby *Falco subbuteo*: the most pairs located, the most pairs successful and the most young fledged, compared with the previous three years (Sharrock *et al.* 1978). Yet, at the same time, in the Federal Republic of Germany, the Hobby was classified as a 'heavily endangered species' and put on the Red List (Blab *et al.* 1977); also, in the German Democratic Republic, reports of decreasing numbers appeared alongside hints of a recovery (Klafs & Stübs 1977, Fiuczynski 1978a).

Ringling returns and observations of colour-ringed groups show that Hobbies, particularly males, are strongly attached to and tend to return to

their birthplace. In this paper we compare field data, gathered mostly from southern England and the north German plains, on this falcon's biology.

Materials and methods

The English data contain the observations of a number of observers, and refer mainly to clutches of eggs. DNT's notes relate to 39 first clutches in the early 1930s; during 1909-36, the late E. P. Chance made notes on 61 nests; the BTO Nest Records Scheme (1950-76) gives accounts of 55 nests; T. A. Waddell has given us data on 62 nests in 1963-74; and A. Rendall and I. E. Hills contributed 31 and eight records, respectively.

The German data rely entirely on DF's observations in the Berlin forests, where 269 nests were inspected during 1956-78 (18 breeding seasons). These all contained young; apart from nests with clutches of addled eggs, which were taken after overbrooding in August for residue analysis, the German material contains no records of nests in which the eggs were destroyed during incubation.

In both countries, data on breeding success are restricted to nests to which the observers climbed or at which fledged young were seen out of the nest; here we have also used Wendland's (1953) studies from 1940 to 1951 north of Berlin. Results on population dynamics and ecology of the German Hobbies have been published elsewhere (Fiuczynski 1978b).

Study areas

Fig. 1 shows the study areas in England and Germany. From within the British range (fig. 2), most of the data are drawn from two main regions:

(i) Salisbury Plain, Wiltshire, where E. P. Chance did most of his work. About 800 km² were covered, most of which had suitable breeding habitat for Hobbies.

(ii) Surrey and south Berkshire, where DNT and others concentrated in the 1930s and where several other observers have worked since 1950. These regions covered about 400 km², but the BTO records for these habitats are drawn from roughly 550 km² in the same general areas.

Fig. 1. Main study areas of Hobby *Falco subbuteo* in England and Germany. 1 = Salisbury Plain, Wiltshire; 2 = Surrey and south Berkshire; 3 = Berlin



In addition, data from the BTO scheme and from other observers include records from Devon, Dorset, Gloucestershire, Hampshire, Sussex, north Berkshire, Oxfordshire, Northamptonshire, Warwickshire, Leicestershire and Suffolk.

In Germany, observations were made in the forests of Scots pine *Pinus*

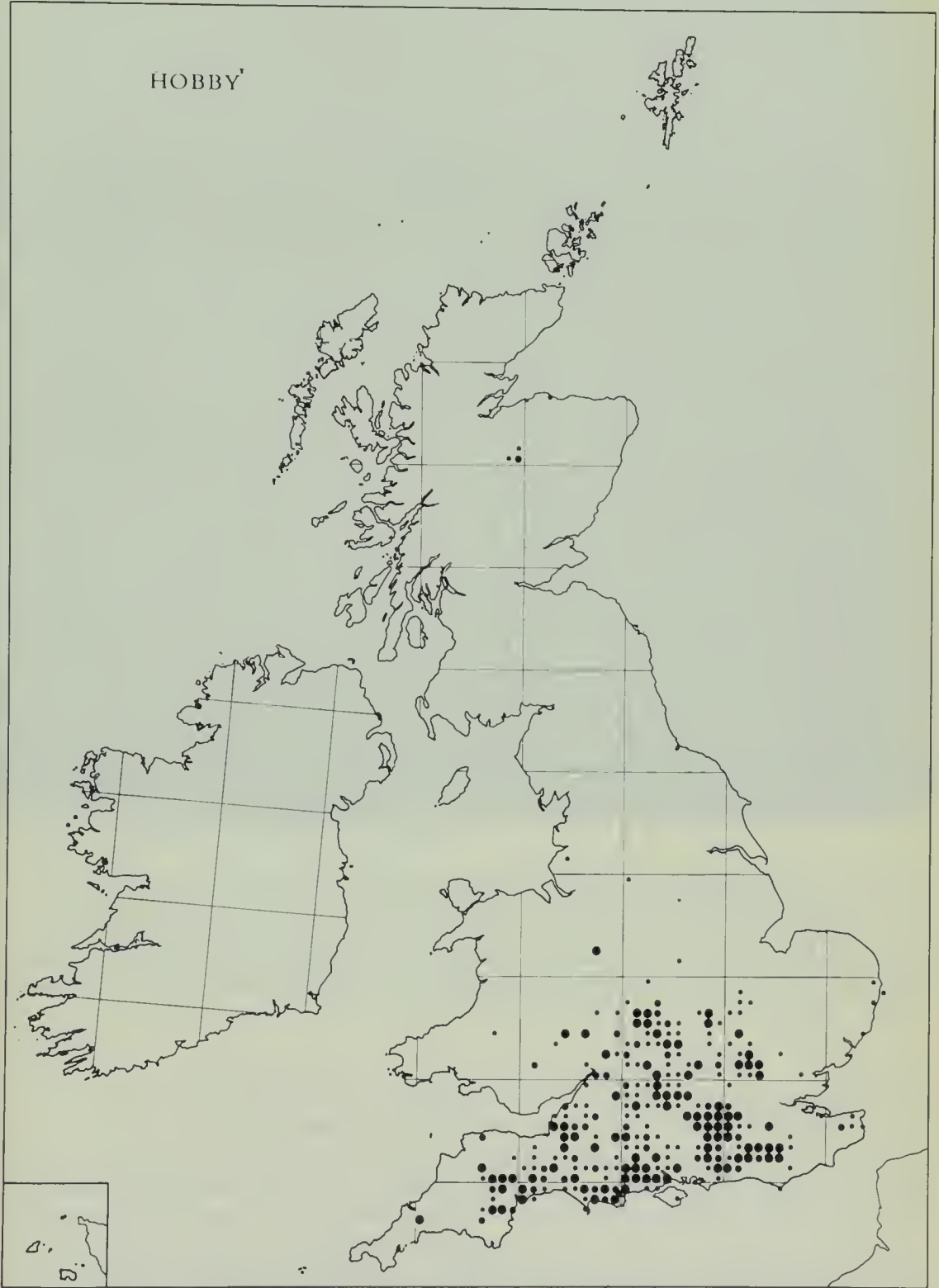


Fig. 2. Breeding distribution of Hobby *Falco subbuteo* in Britain and Ireland during 1968-72 (from Sharrock 1976). Large dots = confirmed breeding; medium dots = probable breeding; small dots = possible breeding. To protect vulnerable sites, three dots have been moved by up to two 10-km squares



148. Favoured feeding area for Hobbies *Falco subbuteo*

sylvestris around Berlin between 52°20'N-52°39'N and 13°05'E-13°45'E, a total of 883 km². Wooded areas covered 76 km² (West Berlin) and 79 km² (East Berlin). Results from the large pinewoods of Oranienburg and Bernau (137 km²) in the north of Berlin have been published by Wendland (1952, 1953).

Habitat

In England, Hobbies breed in several different habitats:

(i) On undulating chalk downland, as on Salisbury Plain, they hunt over pastoral and arable open country and usually nest in clumps, lines, belts and windbreaks composed largely of Scots pines. Some pairs also select old nests of crows *Corvus* in the openings and on edges of both small and large pinewoods, and occasionally in oaks *Quercus* or in mixed woods of pine and beech *Fagus sylvaticus*. Some larger woods sometimes hold two or more pairs. There are few ponds and lakes on these downlands, and the Hobbies sometimes hunt dragonflies (Odonata) over the rivers and moths (Lepidoptera) and beetles (Coleoptera) above the grasslands.

(ii) South of the River Thames, particularly in Surrey, Dorset, north Hampshire and south Berkshire, Hobbies favour heaths and commons. Here they usually nest in clumps and lines of



Heathland bog, England (*Frank V. Blackburn*)

Scots pine, but they sometimes select large open pinewoods and occasionally clumps of elms *Ulmus* or other deciduous trees on heathland fringes; pairs also occasionally nest in the grounds of villas or large houses, usually close to the edges of heaths and commons. These Hobbies exploit rivers, ponds, streams, lakes and marshes for dragonflies and other insects, and the heaths for small passerines. In the New Forest, Hampshire, the species prefers large open pinewoods and clumps of pines, but sometimes nests in oak- and beechwoods close to heathland.

(iii) In Sussex, for example, where a few pairs nest in enclosed parkland with small woods and clumps of mixed trees adjoining farmland attached to castles, mansions or large country houses, they hunt over the surrounding open country and sometimes nest in heronries, as well as in old crows' nests.

(iv) North of the Thames, in north Berkshire, Oxfordshire, Gloucestershire and the Midlands, isolated pairs and occasionally small groups usually choose hedgerow trees, particularly elms, or small deciduous woods in or around farmland.

In Berlin, the Hobbies nest in old open pinewoods near forest clearings and in new plantations not far from the city or its suburbs, where they hunt small birds. Single pairs occasionally nest in pines in parks, gardens and cemeteries (Fischer 1960, Fiuczynski 1965, O. Schnurre *in litt.*).



149. Breeding habitat of Hobby *Falco subbuteo*: pine forest, Berlin 1977; Hobbies nest in old nest of Carrion Crow *Corvus corone* on top of tall Scots pine *Pinus sylvestris* (D. Fiuczynski)

Numbers, breeding density and spacing

The annual breeding numbers in England are not accurately known. Brown (1957) estimated 60-90 breeding pairs, Simson (1966) 57 pairs in six southern counties, and Parslow (1973) 85-100 pairs. Sharrock (1976) enlarged our knowledge considerably: between 1968-72, Hobbies were recorded possibly nesting in 123 10×10 km squares, probably in 43, and definitely in 95. In 1976, 52 pairs were confirmed breeding, with a further 131 possibly breeding (Sharrock *et al.* 1978). From the *Atlas* figures, Sharrock suggested that up to or rather more than 100 pairs may breed annually in Britain. This may, however, be an underestimate, as from two to at least six pairs sometimes nest in the same 10-km square. Isolated pairs scattered through the Midlands and south Midlands are also extremely difficult to locate, as are unsuccessful pairs (without young) later in the breeding season (Fiuczynski 1968). In good years, therefore, possibly more than 150 pairs nest. Numbers fluctuate greatly, however, from year to year: in 1932, for example, 15 pairs nested in a group of southern English habitats where only four pairs were located in 1933.

In Germany, the species is rare in the northwest, but more common in the east, especially east of the River Elbe, but exact breeding numbers are not known for either part. There are also long- and short-term fluctuations, so the picture may be obscure. Schroeder (1970) gave 220 pairs for Mecklenburg (26,537 km², with 5,670 km² of forest area), but later reported a decrease, and calculated 100 pairs in 1974 (in Klafs & Stübs 1977).

In the Berlin study area (fig. 3), numbers were high in the 1950s and early 1960s (1960: 31 pairs, of which 27 in West Berlin), but are now lower



150. Exceptional breeding site of Hobby *Falco subbuteo* in garden of city villa in Berlin from 1963 to 1965 (D. Fluczynski)

(1977: 19 pairs, of which 15 in West, 67 km² forest area; 1978: grand total of 18 pairs). During 1940-51, Wendland (1953) found constant numbers in the pine forests north of Berlin (10-12 pairs, 137 km² woodland area).



Fig. 3. Habitat in German study area, and sites of individual pairs of Hobbies *Falco subbuteo* in 1977. 1 = city and buildings; 2 = forest; 3 = agricultural land and sewage-farm; 4 = sites of pairs in 1977

In southern England, breeding density and spacing between nests vary greatly. In 1932, for example, six pairs nested in the same 10-km square in a much favoured location; two nests were less than 150 m apart, and two others were within 450 m. At the same place, in 1931, two nests were 450 m apart (Nethersole-Thompson 1931a, 1932); and, in 1967, three Hobbies had nests on the extremities of an equilateral triangle with sides about 550 m long (F. Blackburn *in litt.*). In another regular heathland haunt, two nests are sometimes separated by about 700-750 m.

In other regular English breeding habitats, such as Salisbury Plain, nests are seldom less than 5-8 km apart, but in years of high Hobby population (e.g. 1934) clusters of up to four pairs have nested 1.5 km to 2.4 km apart. A recent report from the New Forest indicated a minimum of 16 pairs in an area of 150 km² in 1976 (Sharrock *et al.* 1978). In the south Midlands, in 1974, four pairs also had nests within a radius of 6.4 km. Outside the main breeding areas south of the Thames, however, isolated pairs are usual.

From many nesting trees in Berlin, an observer can hear the neighbouring pair, especially in the western parts of the forests. Minimum distance between two occupied nests was 370 m, and, in another instance, a non-breeding pair stayed about 250 m from the nest of a second. Distances in small and obviously favourable habitats cannot, however, be generalised and extrapolated to larger areas, where lack of observers makes the study of this species even more difficult (Fiuczynski 1968, 1978c; Schroeder 1970).

Nest and nest trees

In England, out of 281 nests, 227 were in Scots pine, 19 in oak, 18 in elm, seven in beech, four in ash *Fraxinus excelsior*, four in larch *Larix*, one in birch *Betula* and one in yew *Taxus baccata*. These figures may slightly distort the proportion in Scots pine, but probably at least 80% of the English Hobby population breeds south of the Thames, where Carrion Crows *Corvus corone* usually nest in pines in the open country favoured by Hobbies. Certain pairs of Hobbies occasionally switch, however, from pines to deciduous trees; one pair moved from its normal heathland to nest in an elm on adjacent farmland; and a second pair chose an ash and then an oak in consecutive years, although apparently suitable crows' nests were available on the heathland (F. Blackburn *in litt.*).

In the open country north of the Thames, crows usually choose hedgerow elms or oaks on the edges of small deciduous woodland. In a sample of 22 nests, 11 were in oak, seven in elm, only three in pine, and one in spruce *Picea*.

Of 278 clutches, 251 were laid in old nests of Carrion Crows, seven in nests of Rooks *C. frugilegus*, seven in old dreys of red squirrels *Sciurus vulgaris*, six in old nests of Magpie *Pica pica*, three in Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus*, two in Jay *Garrulus glandarius* and two in Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea*.

The heights of English nests varied from 4.2 m to 28.3 m above the ground, the average being 13.7 m (sample of 140).

In Berlin, Hobbies inspected old nests of Buzzard *Buteo buteo*, Black Kite *Milvus migrans*, and Carrion Crow of the race *cornix* during courtship, but eggs and young were found only in nests of the last species. Nests were in Scots pine, mostly in the tops of trees up to 30 m above ground level.



151. Pair of Hobbies *Falco subbuteo* feeding young, Surrey, July 1946 (*Eric Hosking*)

Breeding season

In comparison with other European raptors, the Hobby is a late breeder, surpassed only by Eleonora's Falcon *F. eleonora*. To determine the laying season in England, we have used the date on which the clutch was completed. In a few instances, when the ages of small young were recorded, we have calculated back, using 30 days as the average incubation period. (There are four measurements: 28, 30-31 and 31 days: Nethersole-Thompson 1931 and unpublished; and 29 days: T. Beer in BTO Nest Records Scheme. For two clutches in Romania, Kalaber & Szombath 1975 gave 31-32 and 32-33 days, respectively.) Table 1 summarises dates of completed clutches in England from 1896 to 1976.

Table 1. Laying season of Hobbies *Falco subbuteo* in five-day periods, England, 1896-1976

Data from Salisbury, Wiltshire (1926-34, 46 clutches; 1950-76, 10 clutches); Surrey and south Berkshire (1930-56, 20 clutches; 1957-74, 42 clutches); Hampshire (1957-76, 18 clutches); and other counties (1896-1976, 17 clutches)

During the period, the laying season extended from 29th May to 2nd July inclusive (mean date 15th June), the largest number of clutches (70) being completed during the five-day period 13th-17th June

Period clutch completed	No. of clutches	% of total
27-31 May	2	1.3
1-5 June	2	1.3
6-10 June	14	9.2
11-15 June	68	44.4
16-20 June	40	26.1
21-25 June	19	12.4
26-30 June	7	4.6
1-5 July	1	0.7
TOTALS	153	100.0

The Berlin data relate to young, usually two to three weeks old, where individual age has been assessed by checking the stage of plumage development, weight and wing length (cf. Heinroth & Heinroth 1927, Golodushko 1960, Morata 1969, Kalaber & Szombath 1975). In some breeding seasons, sex was also determined and development of young was studied by repeated nest inspections. Only young handled by the observer were used; for analysis, field notes which were given as intervals, for example '24-26 days old', were transformed into a single day, thus '25 days old'. It should be kept in mind, however, that very small young can be aged better by weight alone (under comparable conditions, early morning before first feed), and that fully fledged young will show sex differences in weight (see Fiuczynski 1978b).

Table 2. Hatching dates and calculated laying season in five-day periods of Hobbies *Falco subbuteo* in Berlin in 18 breeding seasons, 1956-78

The data are taken from a total of 256 nests studied (breeding seasons with three or fewer nests are omitted). Dates of completion of clutch are calculated by subtracting 30 days (incubation) from the hatching date of the youngest chick (the late July record involved a yearling female mated to a two-year-old male)

Date of hatching	No. of young hatched	Calculated period clutch completed	No. of clutches	% of total clutches
21-25 June	32	22-26 May	11	4.3
26-30 June	133	27-31 May	38	14.8
1-5 July	225	1-5 June	93	36.3
6-10 July	136	6-10 June	54	21.1
11-15 July	77	11-15 June	41	16.0
16-20 July	24	16-20 June	14	5.5
21-25 July	8	21-25 June	4	1.6
26-30 July	0	26-30 June	0	0.0
31 July	2	1 July	1	0.4
TOTALS	637		256	100.0

Table 2 gives hatching and calculated laying dates of the Berlin Hobbies. The hatching dates of young were calculated from their age at the time of nest inspection. To compare these results with the figures for completed clutches in England (table 1), we have taken the hatching days of the youngest chick and subtracted 30 days for incubation to give the date of completion of clutch. Hobbies usually start incubation after laying the second egg (Nethersole-Thompson 1931a); in broods of three, completion of clutch should be two or three days later.

Observations on 14 broods of four young in Berlin show a mean age difference between youngest and oldest chick of 4½ days (range 0-9 days). This, as well as observations on smaller broods, indicates that the start of incubation may vary. This was the reason for calculating dates of completed clutches instead of beginning of incubation (while some uncertainty on the precise duration of incubation still exists).

Clutch size

The English data (table 3) are restricted to first clutches, and replacement clutches are not considered. The Berlin material is calculated from nestlings, a method which seems to be sound as nestling mortality is low (Fiuczynski 1978b). DF, who avoided climbing to nests until the young had hatched (cf. Oelke 1977, and replies by Wendland 1977 and Fiuczynski 1978c), assessed clutch size by counting the young and adding any unhatched eggs (1-2). In using the Berlin data, we have assumed that Hobbies allow all unhatched eggs to remain in the nests. (DF searched carefully without finding any fragments of broken eggs in the nest or on the ground.) Most of the single unhatched eggs were found in nests containing two live young, but a few nests held two unhatched eggs and a single young. Table 3 gives details of Berlin clutch sizes during 1956-78. In Berlin, nine full clutches of eggs, all but one addled, were counted. These nine, totalling 23 eggs, would average 2.56, but, with a standard deviation from the mean of ± 0.59 (at P = 0.01), this small sample does not provide a valid comparison with the English clutch-size data. The question of replacement clutches in Berlin is open (see Discussion). Clutches of four are unusual in both England and Germany (5-6%), but not so rare as was suggested by I. J. Ferguson-Lees (*Brit. Birds* 71: 182).

Table 3. Clutch sizes of Hobbies *Falco subbuteo* in England in 1897-1976, in Berlin in 1956-78, and in two recent distinct periods in England (1921-38, 1950-76)

The Berlin data include 18 breeding seasons (years with three or fewer nests inspected are

Place	Period	Total omitted) clutches	CLUTCH SIZE				Mean clutch size
			1	2	3	4	
England	1897-1976	278	0	30	234	14	2.9
England	1921-38	103	0	12	85	6	2.9
England	1950-76	133	0	16	109	8	2.9
Berlin	1956-78	269	17	70	166	16	2.7

Clutch size of individual females

In England, most females lay three eggs in every year, but there are a few exceptions. Individual hens, identified by eggs, voice, colour and

behaviour, sometimes lay clutches of different sizes in consecutive years. For example: (i) in 1924 and 1926, a Hobby laid four eggs, and in 1927 three eggs (nest not found in 1925); (ii) a New Forest hen, which annually laid exceptionally large eggs, laid two in 1933, three in 1934 and 1935, and two in 1936; (iii) two other hens each laid four eggs, but produced three in the following years.

A late-laying Surrey Hobby, which produced exceptionally well-coloured eggs, had clutches of two annually in 1930-32. In 1932, she was found in a different territory 2.4 km away, where she was again extremely late in laying (Nethersole-Thompson 1973).

There are too few individually marked German females to give a clear picture. In consecutive years, three colour-ringed ones produced 3/3/3, 2/2/3/3/3/3 and 3/2 young respectively; and two other females, identified by voice and behaviour, produced 4/4/4/3 young and 3/4/4/4/3 (+ 1 egg).

Breeding lives of females

The study of the clutch sizes of individual females also gave some results on their breeding lives, that is the number of consecutive seasons in which a given female was observed. Of 32 female Hobbies observed in England in consecutive years, the average breeding life was 2.6 years. The addition of one or two years could give a rough impression of their minimum age, as female Hobbies attain sexual maturity at the age of one to two years (second to third calendar year) (Glutz *et al.* 1971, Fiuczynski 1978b).

In Germany, the sample of ten individually marked (ringed) females was too small to give a comparison. One individual was observed in six consecutive breeding seasons, first settling to breed when three years old.

152. Female Hobby *Falco subbuteo* with two 21-day-old young, Hampshire, August 1967 (T. A. Waddell)



Breeding success and failure

Breeding success is detailed in table 4. During 1949-72, in England, 47 nests produced 80 fledged young (mean, 1.7 young per nest). This figure might be even lower if all pairs were considered, as some do not breed every year. The Berlin material includes all pairs, breeding and non-breeding, in the study area. 77.5% successfully reared young: 729 young fledged from 391 pairs, of which 303 were successful (mean of 1.86 young per examined pair; mean brood size of 2.41 per successful pair). Data from Wendland's (1953) long-term study close to DF's area are also shown in table 5.

In England, there are few reliable data on the proportion of nests destroyed by natural predators and natural causes. In the sample of 278 clutches (table 3), Carrion Crows destroyed three, red squirrels two and a Tawny Owl *Strix aluco* killed a brood (T. A. Waddell and F. Blackburn *in litt.*). In two nests, the brooding Hobby clawmarked and destroyed single eggs, and a third knocked an egg out of a shallow nest when disturbed by the observer. A nesting tree was felled while eggs were in the nest, and a heath fire destroyed another. In many parts of England, gamekeepers shoot or trap Hobbies, but it is difficult to estimate the proportion of the English population killed in this way; four females recorded in our data were shot.

From the early years of this century, in England, egg-collectors have annually taken clutches from some of the habitats. The BTO's Nest Records cards, and discussion with colleagues, suggest, however, that probably as many Hobbies still nest in England as in the 1920s and 1930s, although shooting and trapping by gamekeepers and the annual taking of clutches may have prevented them from spreading into new areas.

In Berlin, non-breeding, addled clutches, egg-robbery by natural predators, loss of small or half-grown young through predation by pine martens *Martes martes*, as well as young falling from nests in storms,

Table 4. Breeding success of Hobbies *Falco subbuteo* in England and Germany, 1930-78

The mean number of fledged young per examined pair includes unsuccessful pairs, those whose nests were destroyed and non-breeding pairs. References for each place and period (in order listed): DNT; Sheail 1976; BTO Nest Records; T. A. Waddell *in litt.*; Sharrock *et al.* 1978; Fiuczynski 1978a, 1978b, & unpubl.; Wendland 1953

Place and period	No. of pairs studied	No. of pairs successful	Total young reared	NO. OF PAIRS REARING FLEDGED BROOD OF				Mean brood size per successful pair	Mean no. fledged young per examined pair
				1 yng	2 yng	3 yng	4 yng		
England 1930-36	?	6	12	1	4	1	0	2.0	?
England 1938	?	9	21	?	?	?	?	2.3	?
England 1953-72	?	9	19	2	4	3	0	2.1	?
England 1963-72	?	23	57	2	8	13	0	2.5	?
England 1973-76	?	97	182	?	?	?	?	1.9	?
Berlin 1956-78	391	303	729	46	101	143	13	2.41	1.86
N. of Berlin 1940-51	32	17	35	3	10	4	0	2.06	1.09

accounted for 22.5% of the reproductive failure of 391 pairs. North of Berlin, in a sample of 32 pairs, only 17 were successful, failure being due mainly to Carrion Crows of the race *cornix* destroying the eggs (Wendland 1953). The many Tawny Owls in Berlin were not known to kill nestlings; Wendland (1971 and *in litt.*), in his long-term pellet analysis in these habitats, found only the remains of a single adult Hobby. Schnurre (1936), however, proved that Goshawks *Accipiter gentilis* were taking young Hobbies near Berlin, but, in recent years, only one adult Hobby has been recorded as a victim of this hawk. Human interference is probably minimal or insignificant (some Hobbies even nest in shooting ranges—as in England—and near buildings), and egg-collectors are not known to operate in the Berlin forests. In some years, immature females, by not breeding, reduce the total breeding success of the population.

Male Hobbies regularly hunt among buildings in the city of Berlin, where some are killed by colliding with buildings and power lines. Stegmann (*in litt.*) and Dementiev & Gladkov (1951), however, have recorded that lost mates are sometimes replaced, and certain observations in Berlin support this.

Pesticides

Table 5 details recorded pesticide residues in Hobby eggs. Low levels of DDE in England and Germany, and a higher concentration of polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) in the latter country, show that the influence of chlorinated hydrocarbons may be of only minor, if any, importance. (There is also, in Berlin, a lack of any correlation between the biocide contents of addled eggs and reproductive success.) No fragments of broken eggs were found in Berlin nests from 1956 to 1978.

Table 5. Pesticide residues recorded in eggs of Hobbies *Falco subbuteo* in England and Germany

Notes: 1 = addled; 2 = deserted; 3 = from two nests; 4 = one clutch

Place and year(s)	No. of eggs examined	Notes (see above)	DDE in ppm (wet wt)	PCB in ppm (wet wt)	Eggshell index	Reference
Surrey 1975	1	1	9.0	13.4	-	Dr I. Newton <i>in litt.</i>
Wiltshire 1975	1	-	5.0	6.3	-	Dr I. Newton <i>in litt.</i>
-	1	-	4.4	1.0	-	Ratcliffe 1970
England 1914-51	133	-	-	-	1.372	Ratcliffe 1970
Britain 1966-68	1	-	-	1.0	-	Prestt <i>et al.</i> 1970
Westphalia, 1972-73	2	2	4.7-9.2	27-46	-	Bednarek <i>et al.</i> 1975
Berlin 1969	5	1, 3	3.0-6.0	1.0-3.0	-	Fiuczynski 1978b
Berlin 1974	3	1, 4	7.0-9.5	19.1-21.9	-	Fiuczynski 1978b
Berlin 1977	1	1	6.0	20.8	1.207	Fiuczynski 1978a
Berlin 1978	2	3	1.5-1.9	8.5-11.6	1.27	Dr I. Newton <i>in litt.</i>

Food

There has been no systematic study of the Hobby's food in different habitats in England, but there are some clear differences. On Salisbury Plain, Skylarks *Alauda arvensis* are a favourite prey, but the Hobbies also hunt many other species: for example, Tree *Anthus trivialis* and Meadow Pipits *A. pratensis*, Swallows *Hirundo rustica*, House *Delichon urbica* and Sand Martins *Riparia riparia*, and sometimes Swifts *Apus apus*; also fox moths *Macrothylacia rubi* and mayflies (Ephemeroptera) (Simson 1966), but less on dragonflies.

In heathland habitats, Hobbies take Woodlarks *Lullula arborea*, Tree Pipits, Swallows, martins, Great *Parus major* and Blue Tits *P. caeruleus*, Willow Warblers *Phylloscopus trochilus* and other woodland birds. Before brooding begins, both males and females hunt dragonflies, and later they often pass these and other large insects to fledged young.

Feathers and remains of Swifts are sometimes found in nests, and one examined by I. J. Ferguson-Lees (*in litt.*) in Sussex was surrounded by the remains of juvenile Swifts. There are, however, only two records of successful kills of adult Swifts (Walpole-Bond 1914, Humphrey 1966). Hobbies occasionally take larger prey, including well-grown Woodcocks *Scolopax rusticola* (DNT and J. Walpole-Bond unpublished). H. Insley (BTO Nest Records 1974) found two noctules *Nyctalus noctula* in a New Forest nest, and F. Blackburn and T. A. Waddell (*in litt.*) recorded escaped Budgerigars *Melopsittacus undulatus* in Surrey nests. Nethersole-Thompson (1931) watched a Hobby using a stump, from which it dropped on to insects on the ground, but English Hobbies are not known to take rodents or to rob

153. Hobby *Falco subbuteo* at nest with young, Somerset, July 1969 (G. H. E. Young)



Kestrels *Falco tinnunculus* of them as recorded elsewhere, although they have been recorded hovering (Robertson 1977, Harding 1978).

Several breeding habitats in England are close to towns, but there are no records of Hobbies hunting House Sparrows *Passer domesticus* or other urban birds. In contrast, the Berlin food data show a predominance of both House and Tree Sparrows *P. montanus*, which form (at about equal share) 51.4% of 523 bird prey items; they are caught in the suburbs and villages near Berlin and in the city itself (from observations of flight-routes of prey-carrying males and identification of prey carried along these routes, and from observations on hunting). Swallows and martins constitute only 10.9% of the avian prey in Germany, which is supplemented by escaped Budgerigars (9.2%), Greenfinches *Carduelis chloris* (6.9%) and Swifts (6.9%); this is not typical for Germany, where Uttendörfer (1952) found, of 916 avian prey items, 39.7% Swallows and martins, 20.9% larks, and only 5.6% sparrows and 2.4% Swifts. Obviously, Berlin Hobbies are able to make use of the great food resources of the city, as Skylarks are rare, especially in the west of Berlin; the four individuals (0.8%) recorded were caught by males cruising beyond the River Havel, where there is some arable land (see fig. 2). Table 6 lists all avian prey items of Berlin Hobbies found in 1954-78. Table 7 (which should be considered with fig. 2) gives data on systematic collections of prey remains made from May to September, mainly in August. In addition, larger insects such as dragonflies (especially *Sympetrum*) and beetles are often fed to the flying young.

Table 6. Bird species and number taken by Hobbies *Falco subbuteo* in Berlin, 1954-78

Prey species	Number	Prey species	Number
Tree Sparrow <i>Passer montanus</i>	129	Red-backed Shrike <i>Lanius collurio</i>	2
House Sparrow <i>Passer domesticus</i>	124	Reed Bunting <i>Emberiza schoeniclus</i>	2
Budgerigar (escaped) <i>Melopsittacus undulatus</i>	48	Kingfisher <i>Alcedo atthis</i>	1
Swallow <i>Hirundo rustica</i>	39	Sand Martin <i>Riparia riparia</i>	1
Swift <i>Apus apus</i>	36	Yellow Wagtail <i>Motacilla flava</i>	1
Greenfinch <i>Carduelis chloris</i>	36	Duncock <i>Prunella modularis</i>	1
Unidentified sparrows <i>Passer</i>	16	Whinchat <i>Saxicola rubetra</i>	1
Starling <i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>	15	Icterine Warbler <i>Hippolais icterina</i>	1
House Martin <i>Delichon urbica</i>	14	Unidentified warbler <i>Phylloscopus trochilus/collybita</i>	1
Great Tit <i>Parus major</i>	8	Marsh Tit <i>Parus palustris</i>	1
White Wagtail <i>Motacilla alba</i>	6	Crested Tit <i>Parus cristatus</i>	1
Chaffinch <i>Fringilla coelebs</i>	5	Nuthatch <i>Sitta europaea</i>	1
Skylark <i>Alauda arvensis</i>	4	Unidentified treecreeper <i>Certhia</i>	1
Tree Pipit <i>Anthus trivialis</i>	4	Linnet <i>Carduelis cannabina</i>	1
Song Thrush <i>Turdus philomelos</i>	4	Bullfinch <i>Pyrrhula pyrrhula</i>	1
Blue Tit <i>Parus caeruleus</i>	4	Hawfinch <i>Coccothraustes coccothraustes</i>	1
Unidentified swallows (Hirundinidae)	3	Yellowhammer <i>Emberiza citrinella</i>	1
Blackbird <i>Turdus merula</i>	3		
Wheteater <i>Oenanthe oenanthe</i>	2		
Whitethroat <i>Sylvia communis</i>	2		
Pied Flycatcher <i>Ficedula hypoleuca</i>	2	TOTAL (36 species)	523

Table 7. Avian prey recorded at two nests of Hobbies *Falco subbuteo* in Grunewald Forest, Berlin

At nest A, the male hunted in rural and suburban areas west of the River Havel (see fig. 2). At nest B, the male hunted in southwestern suburban districts of Berlin. The data are taken from feathers collected under plucking trees or after food-passes by adult in August

Prey species	NO. OF EACH PREY SPECIES RECORDED	
	Nest A (1955)	Nest B (1956)
Tree Sparrow <i>Passer montanus</i>	21	20
House Sparrow <i>Passer domesticus</i>	15	13
Unidentified sparrows <i>Passer</i>	6	1
Greenfinch <i>Carduelis chloris</i>	6	—
Song Thrush <i>Turdus philomelos</i>	2	—
Swallow <i>Hirundo rustica</i>	2	—
House Martin <i>Delichon urbica</i>	1	—
Whitethroat <i>Sylvia communis</i>	—	1
Blue Tit <i>Parus caeruleus</i>	1	—
Red-backed Shrike <i>Lanius collurio</i>	—	1
Starling <i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>	—	1
Chaffinch <i>Fringilla coelebs</i>	1	—
Hawfinch <i>Coccothraustes coccothraustes</i>	—	1
Budgerigar <i>Melopsittacus undulatus</i>	1	—
TOTALS (13 species)	56	38

Discussion

In both England and Germany, Hobbies show a preference for open-country breeding habitats. Breeding density and spacing in Berlin is also comparable with that recorded in some similar southern English habitats. The English population appears generally to be stable, and possibly in better shape than that in Germany, judging by reports from areas outside Berlin. Data for larger areas in Germany are, however, scarce. So far, pesticides do not seem to have endangered English Hobbies, although data are few; and the higher (but still low) PCB concentrations detected in Berlin eggs have not affected breeding success there in the last two decades.

In most parts of England and Germany, Hobbies take much the same kind of prey. In Berlin, however, they have adapted to a city life, feeding on urban birds such as Greenfinches, House Sparrows and escaped Budgerigars, the last, with its loud calling and bright colours, an obvious invitation to any predator; but, in their Sparrowhawk-like dashes past city buildings, the Hobbies are sometimes killed or severely injured.

Hatching dates show that English Hobbies regularly have a later laying season than those in Berlin (tables 1 and 2). Comparisons of clutch size and breeding success in the two countries pose some problems. Between 1921 and 1976, 236 English clutches averaged 2.94 eggs ($SD \pm 0.39$), with a mean of 2.02 young reared to flying from 144 successful nests (i.e. nests from which at least one young flew). Berlin Hobbies lay smaller clutches (average 2.67 eggs: $SD \pm 0.68$, $t = 5.7$, $p > 0.01$), but rear more young per successful nest (2.41). Different study methods in the two countries may be partly responsible for these variations. In England, DNT and his correspondents examined eggs at all stages of incubation: this gave firm, straightforward data on clutch size. The German data are calculated from nestlings and unhatched eggs. Also, pairs which produce infertile or



154. Hobby *Falco subbuteo*, Spain,
July 1976 (Donald A. Smith)

unhatched clutches may not be representative of an entire group; such pairs, however, did not produce the Berlin single-egg clutches (recorded also in other parts of Germany, but not in English first clutches). Four-egg clutches were found in approximately equal numbers in both countries (5% in England, 6% in Berlin). Other differences between English and Berlin clutch sizes appear through clutches of one to three eggs.

In table 3, DNT refers only to first clutches, data on 20 replacements (average 2.2 eggs) being excluded. In Berlin, DF, by waiting until eggs had hatched, was unable to compute clutches destroyed during brooding. While in English habitats where egg-collectors were operating it was usually possible to distinguish between replacement and genuine late first clutches, the Berlin data may include some replacements. A few yearling females in Berlin also bred late and may have laid two eggs which hatched on 31st July; a second reared a single young which fledged on 21st August; and a third sat on three addled eggs. In both studies, however, the observers made every effort to discover all nests in the study areas: clutches and broods laid and reared by all female age-groups are likely to be shown in our material. Lack of colour ringing in England, and the small sample of individually marked hens in Berlin, prevent further conclusions.

Breeding success in Berlin (brood size 2.41) is higher than in England (2.02): 13 Berlin pairs, for example, each reared four young. The English data show nothing comparable, but, in contrast to the Berlin observations, they use a completely different random collection of records from many observers in different habitats and are derived from a population subjected to some human egg predation and persecution. One wonders if these factors have contributed to the apparently lower breeding success in England, although English Hobbies do not suffer from pine martens and Goshawks, while predation by crows is common to both groups.

Suggestions for further study

1. To obtain precise numbers of populations, observations should begin in May during the Hobby's courtship: the birds are then often noisier and more easy to watch. This early-season work will give more-accurate estimates, as non-breeding pairs and singletons with territories are easily overlooked later. The *Atlas* workers and the Rare Breeding Birds Panel have collected new data and this excellent work is expanding. Observers might especially study fringe areas in England to register changes in range or numbers. (In recent years, Hobbies appear to be expanding and

increasing in southwest England.) Similar studies are required in Germany, and further information may be expected from grid-mapping projects (25 km $\times$ 25 km and 10 km $\times$ 10 km squares).

2. Ringing and counting broods (under licence) would lead to new information on breeding success, and possibly reveal successful broods of four in England. In Germany, outside Berlin, further records on breeding success are required. Klafs & Stübs (1977) and Wodner (1975) have reported that broods have become smaller. Periodic analysis of addled eggs in both countries would also help to check levels of biocide contamination.

3. In England, further observations are needed on egg weights, brooding patterns and rhythms (especially on the roles of individual males in incubation), variations in chipping periods, hatching intervals and incubation periods. In Devon, Trevor Beer (unpublished) recently studied a pair of Hobbies from the first egg until the young were flying; similar studies are needed in other districts.

4. Conservation measures. While egg-collectors and also, presumably, falconers are not active in the Berlin forests, in England some former collectors now watch and make notes on Hobbies and some contribute to the BTO Nest Records and other schemes. We hope that this tendency will grow. Hobbies do not harm game, but some gamekeepers still shoot and trap them; education, persuasion, and liaison with estates are most likely to produce the best results.

Some Hobby haunts in England are controlled by the Ministry of Defence, with which ornithologists would well co-operate. In both England and Germany, efforts should be made to persuade landowners not to cut down nesting woods and nest trees, particularly in the breeding season. In Germany, gamekeepers might be dissuaded from killing the last crows in those forests which lack suitable nests for Hobbies (cf. Wittenberg 1978). Fritzsche & Weise (1963) and an observer in Berlin-Müggelheim in 1978 have had good results from artificial nests (flat baskets placed near the tops of tall trees). Damaged nests can also be exchanged for baskets to prevent young from being thrown down in high winds.

Finally, shooting migrating Hobbies is the most deadly threat to the survival of the young: 19 out of 22 Berlin Hobbies recovered had been shot in the Mediterranean area in their first autumn. Here we must all seek international co-operation and action.

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Summary

Observations on Hobbies *Falco subbuteo* in two English study areas, together with the BTO Nest Records, are compared with studies of a north German group in Berlin (figs. 1, 2; plates 148-154). About 150 breeding pairs are estimated in England in good years; large-scale data

are not yet available from Germany. Breeding density and spacing in favourable habitats are similar in both countries. On the whole, the English population seems more stable than the German. The most favoured nest tree is Scots pine *Pinus sylvestris*; the Carrion Crow *Corvus corone* (*C. c. corone* in England, *C. c. cornix* in Berlin) provides most of the nests.

In 1897-1976, in England, 153 clutches were completed between 29th May and 2nd July, 44% during 11th-15th June. From hatching dates of 637 eggs in 256 nests during 1956-78, Berlin Hobbies complete clutches earlier (tables 1, 2).

In England, 278 first clutches showed a mean of 2.94 eggs. In Berlin, 269 nests (live young plus added eggs) showed a mean of 2.67 eggs per nest (table 3). By contrast, Hobbies in the Berlin forests produced more young, with a mean brood size of 2.41 fledged young per successful pair (729 fledged from 303 nests: 13 broods of four). In England, 144 successful pairs reared 291 flying young (mean 2.02 per pair: no broods of four recorded during study period) (table 4). These results are discussed. Reasons for breeding failure are given, but quantitative English data are lacking; 22.5% of 391 Berlin pairs produced no fledged young.

DDE and PCB residues in added eggs from both countries are summarised in table 5. These range from 3-9 ppm DDE and 1-46 ppm PCB (a small wet weight). Higher PCB figures recorded in Germany have not prevented good breeding results in the last 20 years.

Qualitative data on food of English Hobbies are given. A sample of 523 avian prey items shows that Berlin Hobbies exploit urban birds, including Greenfinches *Carduelis chloris*, House Sparrows *Passer domesticus* and escaped Budgerigars *Melopsittacus undulatus* (table 6); hunting in the city may, however, endanger or kill the adults.

Some suggestions for further study are given, especially on population status, breeding biology and conservation.

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Best recent black-and-white bird-photographs

The standard of prints submitted for this feature—now in its twenty-first year—remains as high as ever. Indeed, we wish that we could include more photographs, since several that have been omitted were comparable in quality to the 16 which we have selected from this year's entry of 196 prints by 32 bird-photographers. Indeed, two of those chosen have been held over (giving room for two additional selections) because they will appear later, accompanying scientific papers: a flying female Merlin *Falco columbarius* by Dennis Green and a Dunnock *Prunella modularis* by Richard Chandler. The prints submitted and the selection reproduced here reflect

the increasing use of small-format cameras, which photographers are finding versatile, allowing a new, more ambitious, 'away-from-the-nest' style of bird-photography.

The work of four photographers appears in this series for the first time: I. Buxton (plate 161, Fulmar), P. Munsterman (plate 162, Smews), Martin B. Withers (plate 166, Stone-curlew) and David Tomlinson (plate 167, Bee-eaters). 'Old hands', however, include the record-holding J. B. & S. Bottomley team (plate 156, Buff-breasted Sandpiper) for the fourteenth year, R. J. C. Blewitt (plate 169, Cuckoo and Willow Warbler) for the tenth year and Dennis Green (see above, Merlin) whose work has been selected every year for each of the past nine. The work of two photographers was so consistently good that we could not avoid selecting two prints this year: Harold E. Grenfell (plates 163 & 164, Puffin and Oystercatchers) and—as in 1979—M. C. Wilkes (plates 165 & 170, Stock Dove and Tufted Duck & Reed Bunting).

Anthony J. Bond's party of Knots flying across a grey November sky (plate 155) captures all the atmosphere of winter coastal birdwatching. In a totally contrasting style, there is the portrait of the vagrant Buff-breasted Sandpiper (plate 156), which is pin-sharp perfection.

Don Smith's colour-transparency of a Tawny Owl carrying a frog *Rana temporaria* won this year's 'Bird Photograph of the Year' (plate 113), so another photograph of that species by the same photographer would have to be rather special to achieve selection for this feature; plate 157 merits this accolade since the photograph shows not only the owl and its prey, but also the habitat, attractively revealed by the silhouettes of the background trees. Even with this further bias against Tawny Owls, Robert T. Smith's portrait of one perched (plate 158) was just too good for it not to rank among this year's top bird-photographs.

Not at a nest-hole, but searching for winter food, Bjørn Huseby's Coal Tit (plate 159) makes an attractive picture, enhanced by the smooth,

155 & 156. Page 297, top, Knots *Calidris canutus*, Merseyside, November 1979 (Anthony J. Bond); bottom, first-winter Buff-breasted Sandpiper *Tryngites subruficollis*, Cornwall, September 1977 (J. B. & S. Bottomley)

157 & 158. Page 298, top, Tawny Owl *Strix aluco* carrying short-tailed vole *Microtus agrestis*, Ayrshire, May 1979 (Don Smith); bottom, Tawny Owl, Dumfriesshire, August 1979 (Robert T. Smith)

159 & 160. Page 299, top, Coal Tit *Parus ater*, Norway, February 1980 (Bjørn Huseby); bottom, Jay *Garrulus glandarius*, Derbyshire, December 1977 (J. Russell)

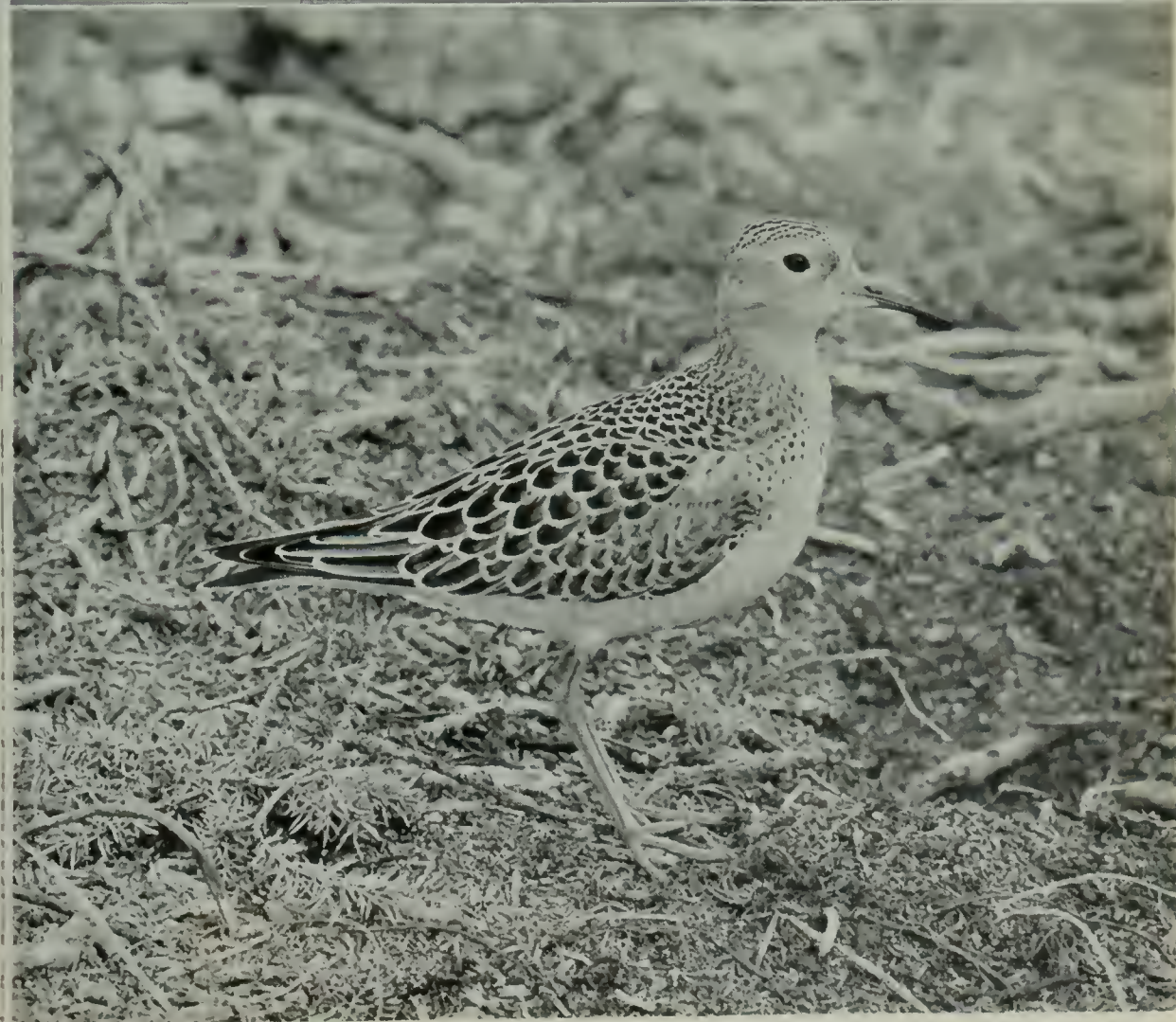
161 & 162. Page 300, top, Fulmar *Fulmarus glacialis*, Jersey, June 1978 (I. Buxton); bottom, Smews *Mergus albellus*, Netherlands, December 1978 (P. Munsterman)

163 & 164. Page 301, top, Puffin *Fratercula arctica*, Dyfed, June 1979 (Harold E. Grenfell); bottom, Oystercatchers *Haematopus ostralegus*, West Glamorgan, March 1980 (Harold E. Grenfell)

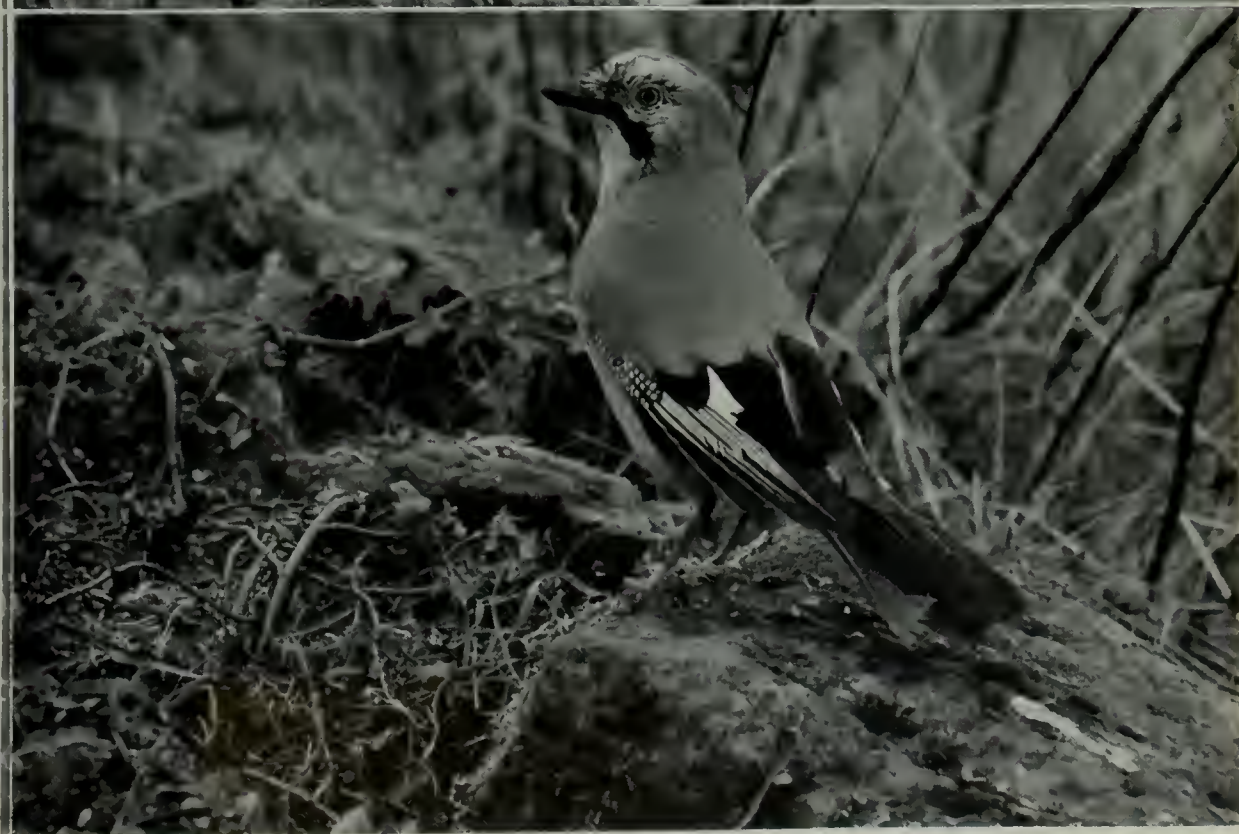
165 & 166. Page 302, top, Stock Dove *Columba oenas*, Worcestershire, June 1979 (M. C. Wilkes); bottom, Stone-curlew *Burhinus oedienemus*, Spain, June 1979 (Martin B. Withers)

167 & 168. Page 303, top, Bee-eaters *Merops apiaster*, Menorca, May 1979 (David Tomlinson); bottom, Treecreeper *Certhia familiaris*, Staffordshire, June 1979 (S. C. Brown)

169 & 170. Page 304, top, juvenile Cuckoo *Cuculus canorus* being fed by Willow Warbler *Phylloscopus trochilus*, Worcestershire, June 1978 (R. J. C. Blewitt); bottom, female Tufted Duck *Aythya fuligula* and female Reed Bunting *Emberiza schoeniclus* on adjacent nests, Warwickshire, June 1979 (M. C. Wilkes)

















sweeping curves of the tree-trunk. J. Russell's winter Jay (plate 160) was doubtless enticed within lens-range by some strategically placed food, but this subterfuge is not evident within the photograph, which, commendably, gives a wholly natural appearance to this shy bird.

Some species are very difficult to capture in flight photographically, but others are far easier. One of the easiest, perhaps, is the Fulmar, since it so often hangs almost motionless in updrafts at its breeding cliffs. For that reason, any photograph has to be judged by very severe criteria; plate 161 passes such tests without fault: every feather is in sharp focus and the total effect is enhanced by the unobtrusive background. The Puffin carrying fish (plate 163) is a quite different subject; more difficult, but equally successful: the more often that we looked at this print, the more we were impressed by the way that it captures the auk's speed and yet also serves to indicate its habitat.

The dense wintering flock of Dutch Smews (plate 162) is full of action, with each individual alert in the rough water; this is surely one of the most attractive of all duck species, yet one that has not been featured before in this series. The flock of Oystercatchers (plate 164) taking off along the glistening shore, the hazy background and the breaking waves: a March scene with a naturally attractive composition, enhanced by the strategically positioned beacon. Even more than in the case of portraits of single birds, the interest of photographs of flocks can be greatly increased by the photographer's skill in positioning.

The superbly sharp picture of the prospecting Stock Dove (plate 165)—almost invariably a shy bird—could hardly be improved. Yet again, the indication of its habitat increases the interest, value and attractiveness of the portrait. A colour-transparency of the Spanish Stone-curlew (plate 166) achieved an Honourable Mention in the competition for Bird Photograph of the Year (see page 203); it is equally striking in black-and-white. The perfect sharpness of both the bird and the vegetation (snails can just be seen on the sedge!) again calls for comment.

The two Balearic Bee-eaters (plate 167), ever on the look out for prey, are displayed well on their dead-branch perch. S. C. Brown's Treecreeper (plate 168), with its bill full of food beside its nesting crevice, is a classic portrait of this common species, which has been photographed well very seldom.

A recently fledged Cuckoo can supply guaranteed opportunities for lively photography, but success such as that achieved in plate 169 depends on the skill of the photographer. This species has, in fact, not appeared in this feature in any of the past 20 years. The nests of Tufted Duck and Reed Bunting in close proximity (plate 170) are a chance discovery; it is by the photographer's ability to take advantage of such opportunities that he should be judged; in this case, both birds, both nests and the marshland vegetation are all perfectly sharp: we have come to expect no less from Michael Wilkes.

Finally, we wish again to remind all photographers that birds on Schedule I of the Protection of Birds Act 1967 may not be disturbed at or near the nest without special approval from the Nature Conservancy

Council (19-20 Belgrave Square, London sw1x 8py). Divers *Gavia* are especially shy and therefore vulnerable to disturbance and, as previously announced (*Brit. Birds* 71: 458), we shall not consider photographs of any diver near its nest for either this feature or for Bird Photograph of the Year.

M. W. RICHARDS and J. T. R. SHARROCK

Mystery photographs



43 Did I hear you groan: 'Not another [word deleted] stint!?' I should understand if you had, for, although the problems of stint identification are sorting themselves out, they are not doing so quickly. In this case, the view is more than adequate, although, in the photographic moment, the bill shape is distorted (by partial opening) and the feet are submerged, so we must see what the plumage pattern has to offer. First, its cleanliness, freshness, and lack of strong chest-marks add up to a clear indication of immaturity. So, the bird is in its first autumn, and only two small gaps in the scapulars suggest anything but full juvenile plumage (in which the genus *Calidris* begins its first migration). Secondly, since its general appearance does recall Little *C. minuta* (and in any stint identification it makes sense to consider the commonest first), the back stripes are worth close inspection. One is present on the edge of the mantle, but, apart from a faint overlap line inside it, the upperparts are otherwise rather evenly and rather coarsely marked. Furthermore, the one full stripe is clearly duller than the white of the underparts; and then we notice that the head is strongly patterned, with a well streaked crown, a bold supercilium and a rather clean lower face. Realising this, we can say that it is not a typical juvenile Little, and worry even more about what it is. Could it be one of the grey morphs of that species, or is it something much rarer?

At this point, the evidence of a single snap-shot is simply insufficient and, to get any farther, we must call 'action' and change to colour. The bird moves onto the mud and we can see that not only is the bill rather stubby in outline, but (silhouetted against the pale chest) broadly tipped. In fact, there is a distinct blob on the end. For the first time, we can begin to think of Semipalmated Sandpiper *C. pusilla*. Our enthusiasm grows as we note that the upperparts are actually buff—or even orange-toned on many feather margins. It is neither a grey nor a foxy bird, so the time has clearly come to look at the feet, hard. We are in luck. The bird stops, faces into wind, stretches a wing and a leg, and, between the toes, we see small but distinct



171. Mystery photograph 44. Identify the species. Answer next month

webs, which give the foot a slightly heavy, clubbed look. Steady: we still have to consider an atypical Western *C. mauri*! So, back to the bill; no, it really is stubby and not long and pointed. Then, the bird is totally obliging. It gets up and treats us to a throaty 'chup' or 'chrrup'. It is a Semipalmated. An hour later, with all these points double-checked, we are in a position to claim it!

The bird was photographed by Peter Smith at Cape May, New Jersey, USA, in September 1976, and we may all be grateful to him for getting such a useful 'side-on' shot. Please note, however, that not all stints give themselves up so easily. Two useful references to their identification may be found in *British Birds* (67: 1-17 & 72: 264-274). D. I. M. WALLACE

Personalities

23 Dr Bruce Campbell

Gae beag an t-ugh thig eun as: 'Though the egg be small, a bird will come out of it'. This Gaelic proverb appears in *A Field Guide to Birds' Nests*, which Bruce wrote jointly with James Ferguson-Lees. This maxim would surely be Bruce's motto.

Nesting is the ruling passion, an essential part of his research. He does not agree with the absolutists who say you should never go near nests. The fruits of his careful searching are recorded on Nest Record Cards and in his diaries, no longer in cotton wool.

Broadcasting, television and journalism benefit from his expertise and understanding of the full aspects of ornithology and natural history.

Any study of birds means a lot of waiting and watching: his sensitive searching, accurate observation and meticulous recording are a model for all who have spent time in the field with him.



172. Dr Bruce Campbell, ringing nestling Tawny Owl *Strix aluco* (Graham J. Wren)

'I'm always looked on by my ornithologist friends to be a bad getter up early in the morning and a tremendous stay at home. Of course, I've been to a few of the famous places but on the whole I find Oxfordshire has quite enough to keep me occupied.'

Thus, I recall his pleasure when he climbed after me into a frail, springy thorn bush, which threatened to deposit us both into a stagnant pond below, to look into a Carrion Crow's nest. With a beam in his eye, he confided, 'There's no finer sight on a May morning than a fresh clutch of Carrion's eggs lying on a lining of sheep's wool, with the warm sun on them!'

Bruce is always pleased to see or to learn something new. In the 1979 season, he saw his first young Cuckoo developing in a Spotted Flycatcher's nest, and ringed it before it fledged. In an Upper Thames farmyard, he discovered an unrecorded colony of fairy foxgloves *Erinus alpinus*, which made up for our failure to find the nest of a local Curlew after several evenings' hunting. On another occasion, he saw and ringed a brood of House Martins in a removable nestbox; they too were a first, and he analysed and noted the make-up of the nest lining. I sometimes wonder whether he can read his own notes, for his handwriting can be undescribably awful!

Ringings—be it a brood of Swifts, Tawny or Little Owls, Kestrels or

Hobbies—is always a looked-forward-to event, for he will turn up with his Wootton boys, a ringer he is training, or some eminent friend. Beforehand, he invariably enquires if this is in order. The farmer, who has ‘hosted’ the nest, is also encouraged to take a close look at ‘his’ charges, as well as provide us with a ladder. When a young Tawny Owl left its mark, on the clean white handkerchief he always unfolds on the ground to safeguard loose rings, he noticed that the droppings contained tapeworms. The soiled linen was promptly placed in a plastic bag for identification of the contents.

Last June, with his *Field Guide* in hand, I checked the details against my first Dotterel’s nest on a Grampian hill: it was word perfect, nothing left out. That evening, we had to give him a full report of our search-and-find operation, and the assurance that the text was up to the ultimate test.

Only the previous day, we had spent 13 hours with him in the glens and moors and had seen an Osprey which later elicited his remark ‘Who’d have thought 20 years ago that three ornithologists in Scotland would hardly give an Osprey a second glance?’ We were, of course, searching closer to the heather.

Nobody who was in Oxford on 14th November 1966 will forget the symposium on Golden Eagles delivered by Seton Gordon and Derek Ratcliffe. Sporting the kilt of his famous clan, Bruce welcomed us all in Gaelic.

These personal impressions have said nothing of his achievements or contributions to ornithology; this has been intentional, since Bruce’s autobiography, *Birdwatcher at Large*, was published last year. Briefly, however, we should note that he has been secretary and vice-president of the BTO; vice-president of the BOU; a council member of the National Trust, of the Wildfowl Trust, of the British Ecological Society and of the RSPB; president of the Oxford Ornithological Society, of the Banbury Ornithological Society and of the West Oxfordshire Field Club; and chairman of the Berks, Bucks and Oxon Naturalists’ Trust. In 1978, he was made a member of Wolfson College, Oxford.

His study of Pied Flycatchers, at Nagshead, in the Forest of Dean, is well known. In 1952, the BTO aided an investigation into the status and distribution of the Pied Flycatcher in Britain. For three weeks, Bruce toured the lesser known parts of the species’ range, and found several new breeding localities. The nestbox study and ringing is now carried on by others at Nagshead, which was declared a RSPB reserve in 1974, after negotiations with the Forestry Commission.

The magazine *The Countryman*, to which he regularly contributes, has been greatly enlivened by his writing and expertise. He is currently engaged in the mammoth task of revising *A New Dictionary of Birds* for the BOU. Despite all this, Margaret, his wife, their family and grandchildren have not been neglected in his busy life. He is also a keen supporter from the terraces of Scotland’s rugby XV, a caring visitor to a friend in hospital and a practising churchman.

There is no finer naturalist to take us into the 1980s; as he looks forward to his sixty-sixth season in the countryside he loves, he continues to write and research. *Slàinte mhath*, Bruce, *slàinte mhór*. IAN M. WALKER

Notes

Cormorant perching on electricity cable Various gulls (*Laridae*) and terns (*Sternidae*) have been noted perching on wire (*Brit. Birds* 72: 343-344) following the statement by W. G. Harvey (*Brit. Birds* 70: 545-546) that he could find no reference to web-footed birds perching on wires for protracted periods. At 08.45 GMT on 16th April 1978, I noticed two Cormorants *Phalacrocorax carbo* perched on the uppermost (earthing) wire of power lines where they crossed the River Usk 1 km northeast of Caerleon, Gwent. They were approximately 5m and 25m respectively from a pylon. At 09.20 they were joined by a third. By 09.45 hours, none remained on the wire, but a Cormorant, perhaps one of the original three, was perched on the top of the pylon; at 10.05, this was joined by another about 5m out on the earthing wire. All had folded wings when perched; there was only a slight wind.

NEIL TROUT

24 The Moorings, Newport, Gwent NPT 7JB

Black-tailed Godwit displaying over felled area of forestry plantation

At about 13.45 GMT on 11th May 1978, in the Breckland district of East Anglia, my attention was drawn to a bird calling in high display flight over a recently felled section of forestry plantation. Closer inspection revealed the bird to be a Black-tailed Godwit *Limosa limosa* in full summer plumage. Display flights continued at frequent intervals during the next half-hour, until I left the area. On my return at 18.00 hours, the godwit was still present. The area forms a rectangle of 1 km × 300m and is thickly littered with the stumps and branches of felled Scots pines *Pinus sylvestris*; it is divided from the heath by a line of young pines, and the nearest water is 5 km to the west. I revisited the area on 12th May, but the godwit was not present. It is interesting to speculate whether this species may spread to this new breeding habitat in Britain, particularly since, in other parts of its range, it nests in forest clearings as well as on heaths, in scrub willow *Salix* and on dunes.

ALAN J. LAST

130 Fornham Road, Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk

Identification of an unusual Common Gull On 1st February 1977, at Radipole Lake, Dorset, DJF found an unusual gull which he identified as a first-year Ring-billed Gull *Larus delawarensis*. It remained in the area until at least 12th March and was seen by AQ and numerous other observers, all of whom agreed with the identification. The record was accepted by the Rarities Committee and would have been published but for the following events. Photographs of first-year Ring-billed Gulls, obtained by AQ in April and May 1977 on the east coast of the USA, were compared with one of the Radipole bird taken by S. Greenwood. It was apparent that the latter's bill was not thick enough for Ring-billed, and further comparison with photographs of Common Gulls *L. canus* showed the bills to be almost identical. This suggested a misidentification. Circulation of the information



to DJF, who also had his own photographs of the Radipole individual, led to his full agreement and a formal withdrawal of the record. It is interesting to evaluate the features which misled so many observers:

GENERAL APPEARANCE Superficially, stood out as different from nearby first-winter Common Gulls; head and underparts whiter, with only a few dark streaks, and wing-coverts faded pale grey, lacking usual brown coloration. In retrospect, appearance was typical of first-summer Common Gull, although this plumage is not usually acquired until about April. Further features suggestive of Common Gull were clear-cut blackish sub-terminal tail band and the grey of mantle, which was no paler than on Commons. In flight, mid-wing panel showed on upperwing, but not so well marked as on typical first-winter Ring-billed, although degree of translucency in outer secondaries and inner primaries at least as prominent. Essentially, whiter, more clean-cut appearance than first-winter Common Gulls, possibly due to combination of high degree of wear (although this not apparent in field) and early moult into first-summer plumage.

SIZE AND BUILD A little larger than most Common Gulls and stood taller, although difficult to be sure whether this was due to

longer legs, more erect posture or both. Longer winged, larger headed and heavier chested than Common, though latter two points not entirely borne out in photographs and may have been effect of whiter plumage of those parts. **BILL** Assessment of bill thickness surprisingly difficult in field. Bright flesh base and conspicuous blackish tip made bill stand out against the generally grey backgrounds, whereas grey-green bases to bills of most accompanying first- and second-year Common Gulls tended to blend with background. So far as we know, all observers described bill as thicker than that of Common Gull, but subsequent comparison of photographs showed this to be unfounded. Measurements to obtain thickness-to-length ratios, useful in assessing the rather subjective criterion of bill shape, proved possible even from quite poor photographs. Thickness was measured at thickest part near gonys, and two measurements of length were taken: from extremity of feathering on upper mandible to tip, and from centre of eye to tip (table 1).

Table 1. Measurements from photographs of bill dimensions of Common *Larus canus* and Ring-billed Gulls *L. delawarensis* and the unusual Radipole gull

	Number of photographs examined	Ratio of bill length (from feathering) to thickness	Ratio of bill length (from eye) to thickness
Common Gull	11	2.33-3.20	4.90-6.40
Ring-billed Gull	7	2.00-2.35	4.04-5.30
Radipole bird	1	2.46	6.07



173. First-year Common Gull *Larus canus*, originally misidentified as Ring-billed Gull *L. delawarensis*, Dorset, February 1977
(I. S. Robertson)

We concluded that the Radipole individual (plate 173) was a first-year Common Gull in an abnormal or unseasonal plumage, which made it look quite different from the other first-winter Common Gulls with which it associated. This, and its less striking structural differences, especially its apparently thicker bill (an illusory impression created largely by its bright coloration), led to the misidentification.

D. J. FISHER and A. QUINN
RSPB, The Lodge, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 2DL

Foot-paddling by pairs of Herring Gulls Since my earlier note on foot-paddling by gulls *Larus* on grassland (*Brit. Birds* 69: 180-181), I have watched isolated pairs of Herring Gulls *L. argentatus* during the winter, in fields at Drift, Penzance, Cornwall, well separated from the main flocks. Paired individuals approached each other very close, often less than 1 m, and standing side by side or one a little behind the other, and began simultaneous foot-paddling on the grass. The impact on the ground of two gulls so close together seemed to cause many more earthworms (Lumbricidae) to appear on the surface than if they were foot-paddling well apart. Stray gulls sometimes attempted to join a pair in this activity, but the male of the pair flew up or chased away the intruder. It appeared, therefore, that this behaviour not only benefited the gulls in providing earthworms, but also strengthened the pair-bond outside the breeding season.

BERNARD KING
Gull Cry, 9 Park Road, Newlyn, Penzance, Cornwall

Woodpigeon alighting on sea and drowning The note and letters on pigeons *Columba* swimming (*Brit. Birds* 68: 467-468; 71: 138) prompt me to record the following. At about 15.30 GMT on 18th February 1955, I was walking near Dornoch, Sutherland, when a Woodpigeon *C. palumbus* flew past me parallel to the shore at a height of about 6 m. All vegetation and landmarks on the dunes and golf courses beyond were completely covered by snow. Shortly after passing me, the pigeon turned seawards, but, when about 250 m out, it flew back and rapidly descended to sea level, skimming above the water in undulating flight. It appeared to be about to alight on the narrow strip of sand, but suddenly rose and headed out to sea again. About 200 m from shore, it touched the water two or three times and finally alighted. For the next ten minutes, it swam quite buoyantly, despite a fair swell. A number of Herring Gulls *Larus argentatus* hovered over the pigeon for a minute or two, but flew away without molesting it. Shortly afterwards, its plumage became dishevelled, until only a tuft of feathers was visible. Perhaps, in contrast to the white snow, the pigeon had mistaken the darkness of the sea as a possible landing site.

D. MACDONALD
Elmbank, Dornoch, Sutherland IV25 3SN

Juvenile Swallow in Strathclyde in May On 18th May 1978, at Doonfoot, Strathclyde, I observed three hirundines resting on the sand. The two outer ones appeared to be normal adult Swallows *Hirundo rustica*, but the central one had a dull cast of brownish on the crown and closed wings. When it turned its head, the forehead and gorget were a pale pinkish buff. In flight, its tail feathers were clearly the short clipped forks of a juvenile, and the flight itself was clumsy and laboured compared with that

of the adults. I assumed that, since many of the spring migrants were delayed in 1978 by the persistent cold weather, this juvenile had followed the migration of the late-arriving adults.

RAYMOND H. HOGG

Schoolhouse, Crosshill, Maybole, Ayrshire

This and earlier notes (*Brit. Birds* 62: 282-283, 283-284; 70: 122, and editorial note) establish the occasional presence of juvenile Swallows in northern Europe in early spring, and we shall not be publishing any further notes on the subject. Eds

Field identification of adult Long-billed Pipit As with many species whose range only just penetrates the boundaries of the western Palearctic, the Long-billed Pipit *Anthus similis* suffers from a dearth of adequate field descriptions in the literature. From our experience of the subspecies *captus* of Israel and the Lebanon, the notes in Heinzel *et al.* (1972, *The Birds of Britain and Europe with North Africa and the Middle East*) are misleading. The following, therefore, is a brief summary of our notes on adult Long-billed Pipits observed in Israel, compared with the Tawny Pipit *A. campestris*, the only real confusion species. It must be stressed that the notes refer to *A. s. captus* (other subspecies differ slightly in size and colour).

The Long-billed Pipits of Israel and Lebanon appeared to us to be the same size as Tawnys (i.e. about 16.5 cm), not larger (19 cm) as noted by Heinzel *et al.* We found the extra length of the 'long bill' to be imperceptible in the field and the buff outer tail feathers to be useless as a field character.

How then can we recognise Long-billed Pipits? Compared with Tawny Pipits, they are noticeably greyer, lacking the buffs and sandy-browns of that species; the dark centres of the median coverts and, especially, the tertials, so obvious on the vast majority of Tawnys, are lacking; there is no obvious pink at the base of the lower mandible, and no moustachial stripe; and the supercilium is weak and extends only to just beyond the eye. Long-billed Pipits are vaguely streaked on the mantle and to a variable extent on the breast, at least at the sides. When viewed from the rear, the greyiness of the mantle and the slight streaking reminded TAW of a Rock Pipit *A. spinoletta* of the nominate race (so-called 'Water Pipit').

In Israel, Long-billed Pipits inhabit rocky hills or mountainous areas with sparse low scrub, sometimes near woods of pines *Pinus*. Tawny Pipits are more catholic in their habitat choice and, especially on passage, the two species are often found together.

T. A. WALSH and A. WASSINK

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Subsequent to our acceptance of the above contribution, the Rarities Committee has had occasion to solicit opinions on the identification of Long-billed Pipit from observers familiar with the species. The following notes summarise points (always in comparison with Tawny Pipit) made by C. D. R. Heard, P. A. D. Hollom, R. F. Porter, Derek A. Scott and D. I. M. Wallace.

STRUCTURE AND BEHAVIOUR Larger and heavier-bodied; general character recalling Rock Pipit, with heavy chest and rather 'shaggy' appearance to plumage; stance more upright, but less than that of Richard's Pipit *A. novaeseelandiae*; carriage of tail not wagtail-like; when perched, often flicks and fans tail upwards; tail long and broad-ended; bill conspicuous, long, deep and heavy to the tip, appearing to droop, pale, tipped darker; legs may look short in relation to size, especially tail-length. **PLUMAGE** Consistent characters, independent of age and race, appear to be that tail is darker than upperparts (which are sandy or greyish-brown); underparts are dull (buffish, at least on flanks) with indistinct smudges on at least sides of breast (sometimes not obvious in field); pale edges and dark centres to wing-coverts are less

distinct than on Tawny; buffish-white colour of outer tail feathers is often very difficult to see in field. CALL Two distinct calls have been rendered: (1) rich 'tchup', quiet soft 'tchut'; and (2) a louder flight-note, 'che-vee', 'che-wee', 'cheree' like rich Yellow Wagtail *Motacilla flava* and not unlike Tawny Pipit, distinctive 'chereep' or 'chlup', drawn-out 'chreep' or 'preep'. EDS

Identification of Red-flanked Bluetail In view of recent accounts of abnormally plumaged Robins *Erithacus rubecula* (*Brit. Birds* 72: 231-233; 73: 107-108), I feel that the distinctive characteristics, especially the call, of female and immature Red-flanked Bluetails *Tarsiger cyanurus* should be emphasised.

During eight weeks in Nepal from early November 1979, I became familiar with this species, seeing 58, of which 39 were females or immatures. While the uniform brown upperparts with bluish rump, blue tail and faint white eye-ring are distinctive enough, the underparts are even more so. All 39 showed a very clear-cut, narrow white throat, with a strong grey wash on the breast, fading to whitish on the lower belly and undertail-coverts. The flanks were always clearly orange, but varied in brightness, and the tail colour was often hard to determine from below, looking dark. These features were well illustrated by Heinzel *et al.* (1972, *The Birds of Britain and Europe with North Africa and the Middle East*).

Although they were not particularly shy, I nearly always found the bluetails in deep forest undergrowth or in thick shrub at forest edges. Once the call had been learned, however, most were first located by hearing them. Contrary to the opinions given in most field guides, I did not find the call at all like that of a Robin, but a quite distinct harsh 'guk' or 'gug', as if made from the back of the throat, and often repeated once or twice in a burst. The only other similar call made by a west Palearctic species that I found was the 'guck' of the closely related Siberian Rubythroat *Luscinia calliope*.

RICHARD J. FAIRBANK

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Bittern-like posture of juvenile Sedge Warblers It is well known that young birds of a wide variety of species 'freeze' in response to parental alarm calls. I have often seen this behaviour when following up the fortunes of broods of colour-ringed warblers. In August 1979, on two occasions with two separate broods of Sedge Warblers *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus*, the young adopted a rigid, upright posture which I had previously associated only with Bitterns *Botaurus stellaris*. I made quick sketches from a distance of 1-2m and James Dickson has kindly used these as the basis for his drawing which illustrates the behaviour much more effectively than words. As the fledglings had left the nest one or two days previously, the parents were in close attendance and called vigorously in alarm. On both occasions, the young warblers were perched near—but not against—upright branches of elder *Sambucus nigra*. They were extremely well camouflaged and did not move, even when I approached to within 0.5m. Other members of the broods froze in the



normal hunched position when in the surrounding thickets of bramble *Rubus*. This behaviour was never observed for any of the other five species of warblers which bred in the study area.

E. S. DA PRATO

38 Carlaverock Grove, Tranent, East Lothian

Dr Colin Bibby has commented that, although recently fledged Sedge Warblers and Reed Warblers *A. scirpaceus* are well camouflaged and sit very still, he has never seen nor read of behaviour similar to that described by Mrs da Prato. EDS

Bittern-like posture of juvenile Treecreepers At 15.00 GMT on 12th June 1975, in hot, sunny weather with a light southerly wind, we saw a party of two adult and four juvenile Treecreepers *Certhia familiaris* in a Cotswold, Avon, woodland. They took no obvious notice of us and we watched them for five minutes. One of the juveniles climbed into the fork of an ash *Fraxinus excelsior* some 5m from the ground. It was fed by an adult, which left; it then immediately adopted a bill-up stance, recalling that of a Bittern *Botaurus stellaris*, in the fork and 'froze', facing away from us. We had made no sound or movement, and the rest of the Treecreepers continued foraging and calling. The juvenile was not pressed against the tree trunk in the normal protective posture, but was perched erect in the fork, looking like a small broken-off branch. It maintained this position for three minutes, until an adult returned to feed it and the two moved on with the rest of the party. This behaviour has been recorded by Sharrock (1976), whose description clearly refers to a protective posture. In this case, the stance did not appear to be a response to an outside threat (unless our presence had been registered). The other Treecreepers did not react and no large birds were in the area at the time. During daylight, Treecreepers are rarely motionless (Bannerman 1973), except when threatened (Bent 1948), sunbathing (*Brit. Birds* 43: 117; 45: 176) or, in one case, perched on a lady's shoulder for about a minute (*Brit. Birds* 38: 139). This individual could have been sunbathing, as plenty of sun penetrated the canopy at the time. On other occasions when sunbathing has been recorded, however, tail feathers and wings have been extended; this was not so with this example. A bill-up stance seems to be characteristic of a singing Short-toed Treecreeper *C. brachydactyla* (*Brit. Birds* 70: 83), but we have never seen this posture adopted by a Treecreeper.

JOHN HARPUM and LYN WEBB

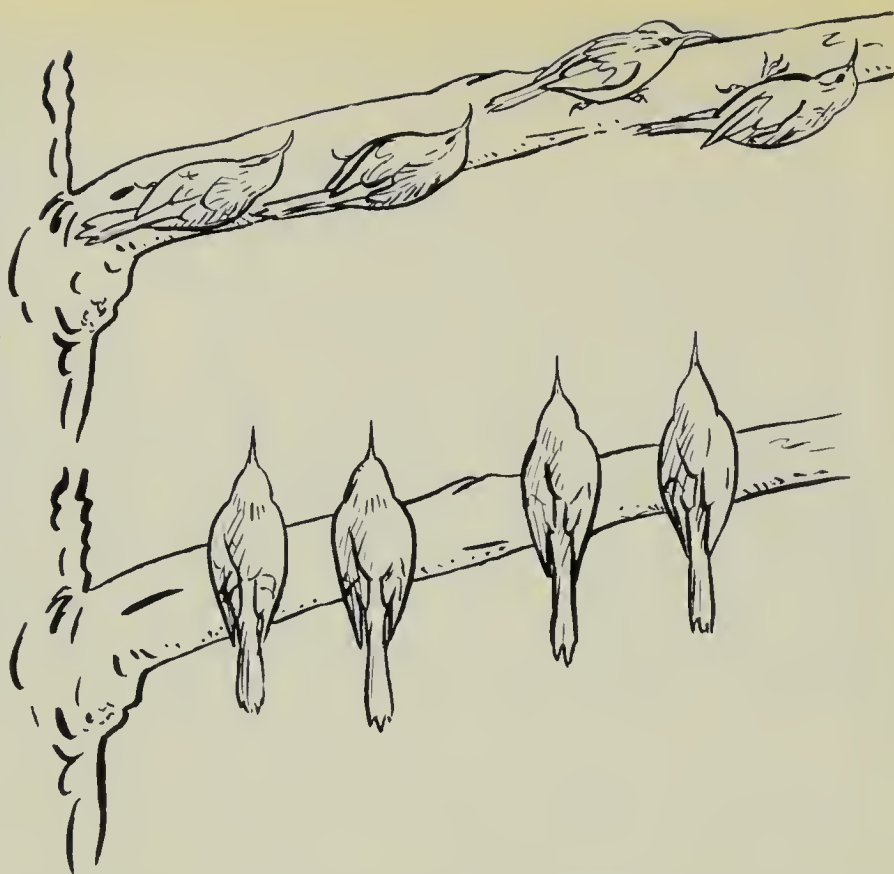
Cotswold Study Group, St Paul's College, Cheltenham, Gloucestershire

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In my experience, recently fledged Treecreepers often 'freeze' when an observer approaches closely. In normal circumstances, when climbing a vertical tree trunk, this has an obvious antipredator benefit. I can, however, recall three occasions in the past 20 years when I have seen young Treecreepers freeze in a head-up position on a horizontal branch. The most recent instance was in June 1972 at Inchvuilt Wood in Glenstrathfarrar, Highland. Four fledglings were working their way along a branch when either they saw me standing a few metres away or were warned of my

Fig. 1. Recently fledged Tree-creepers *Certhia familiaris*, Highland, June 1972: top, creeping along branch; bottom, 'freezing' in head-up position, recalling similar stance of Bittern *Botaurus stellaris*, which would give camouflage on a vertical trunk, but makes them conspicuous on a small, horizontal branch (drawn by R. A. Hume from rough sketches by JTRS)



presence by one of their parents; they all suddenly changed position to point their bills upwards and—far from becoming inconspicuous—stood out clearly like a row of tiny Bitterns (see fig. 1).

J. T. R. SHARROCK

Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3NJ

Fifty years ago . . .

'NIGHT SOARING OF SWIFTS. Still there remains the question—do the birds come down and roost in the open? The only way to prove conclusively that they do not is to go up in an aeroplane and find them soaring in their aerial "park"—to cruise round the flock, and by aid of a searchlight get details of how the birds maintain their height in the "park" all night.' (*Brit. Birds* 24: 50, July 1930)

Letters

Terns perching on wire I do not think that wire-perching by terns (*Brit. Birds* 70: 545-546; 72: 343-344) is all that unusual, despite poor documentation in the literature. Indeed, I suspect that the habit is locally quite common, especially on the breeding grounds. I first noticed it among Common Terns *Sterna hirundo* at Teesmouth, Cleveland, as long ago as 27th August 1955, when they balanced skilfully for long periods on wires transverse the marshy pools where they nested in a rather industrial landscape. Wire-perching among the Teesmouth Common Terns could well date further back than 1955; certainly, it has persisted (if somewhat irregularly recorded) for over 20 years since then, though, in such an exposed situation, wind usually deters any attempt even to alight on the wires.

D. GRAHAM BELL

Farne View, The Wynding, Bamburgh, Northumberland NE69 7DD

Announcement

'Frontiers of Bird Identification: a "British Birds" guide to some difficult species' This book will be published on 28th August 1980, price £7.95. All subscribers to *British Birds* can, however, obtain a copy at the special prepublication price (£1.50 off and post-free) by using the coupon enclosed with this issue or one of those made available previously to readers (only one coupon per book). The special coupon offer closes on 28th August 1980. A cheque or postal order for £6.45 or credit card number and signature should accompany each order, which should be sent to British Birds Book Special Offer, Subscription Department, Macmillan Journals Ltd, Brunel Road, Basingstoke, Hampshire RG21 2xs.

Requests

'BWP, volumes 4-7' With the recent publication of volume 2 of *The Birds of the Western Palearctic* and work well advanced on volume 3 (covering waders, gulls and terns), we are actively planning volume 4 (auks to woodpeckers) and the final three volumes (Passeriformes). As the first two volumes have made clear, knowledge of the western Palearctic avifauna varies enormously, ranging from species which have been so well-studied that it is often difficult to compress the information into the space available to those where even the basic data are scanty or absent. The latter group includes those species which are found mainly in the east or south of the region, and for many countries in these areas our knowledge of distribution is patchy or badly out of date. For such species, there are many ways in which readers could help, not only on key points of identification (including voice), but in many cases on major aspects of their biology: habitat, movements, food, social pattern and behaviour, and breeding. It is quite impossible to list all the little-known species still to come, but a random sample might include Lichtenstein's *Pterocles lichtensteinii* and Crowned Sandgrouse *P. coronatus*, Long-toed *Columba trocaz* and Laurel Pigeon *C. junoniae*, Brown Fish Owl *Ketupa zeylonensis*, Hume's Tawny Owl *Strix butleri*, Golden Nightjar *Caprimulgus eximius*, Black-crowned Finch-lark *Eremopterix nigriceps*, Dupont's Lark *Chersophilus duponti*, Long-billed Pipit *Anthus similis*, Grey Hypocolius *Hypocolius ampelinus*, Canary Islands Stonechat *Saxicola dacotiae*, Green Warbler *Phylloscopus nitidus*, Iraq Babbler *Turdoides altirostris*, Corsican Nuthatch *Sitta whiteheadi* and Rufous-backed *Passer iagoensis* and Golden Sparrow *P. luteus*; many more could be added. If you have made a special study of, for example, voice, breeding or behaviour of any of these, or other little-known species, I should be delighted to hear from you, but even an isolated observation on some aspect of their biology may prove to be a valuable missing piece in the jigsaw. Full acknowledgment will be made. If your travels enable you to supply recent data on distribution (especially proved breeding) in many countries in the south and east (e.g. Syria, Lebanon, Iraq, Jordan, Libya, the Cape Verde Islands) the Country Correspondents listed in volume 2 will be pleased to hear from you, or you can write direct to me: Stanley Cramp, 32 Queen Court, London W6LN 3BB.

Mute Swan corpses Deaths of Mute Swans *Cygnus olor* are unusually numerous on certain rivers, due to lead poisoning by fishing shot and weights. To investigate this problem, full post-mortems will be carried out on all corpses found in Britain between 1st April 1980 and 31st March 1981. Anyone finding a Mute Swan corpse is asked to telephone their nearest Veterinary Investigation Centre: there are 24, at Aberystwyth, Bangor, Bristol, Cambridge, Cardiff, Carmarthen, Gloucester, Leeds, Lincoln, Liverpool, Loughborough, Newcastle, Northampton, Norwich, Penrith, Reading, Shrewsbury, Starcross (Devon), Thirsk, Truro, Weybridge, Winchester, Worcester and Wye (Kent); numbers are listed in telephone directories under 'Agriculture'; in Scotland, telephone Alan Hunt: Kegworth (05097) 2332. This investigation complements those concerning other waterfowl, noted previously (*Brit. Birds* 72: 556).

Identification of American 'Marsh Hawks' Wholly rufous and unstreaked underparts are said to distinguish juvenile and first-winter Hen Harriers *Circus cyaneus* of the Nearctic race *hudsonius* (known in North America as Marsh Hawks) from immatures of the Eurasian race *cyaneus*. As noted by D. I. M. Wallace, however, the nominate race can apparently occasionally produce young with rufous underparts (*Brit. Birds* 67: 518), and this has prompted dispute over the accepted record of *hudsonius* at Cley, Norfolk, from October 1957 to April 1958, which was identified mainly by the colour of its underparts (*Brit. Birds* 64: 537-542). To assist it in its review of this record and assessment of two later claims, the Rarities Committee will welcome (1) good photographs of immature *hudsonius*, (2) suggestions as to field characters other than underpart-coloration which might distinguish the two races, and (3) firm evidence that immatures with unstreaked rufous underparts really do occur in the Eurasian population. These should be sent to P. J. Grant, Chairman, Rarities Committee, 14 Heathfield Road, Ashford, Kent TN24 8QD.

Identification of *Phylloscopus* warblers Various pairs and trios of *Phylloscopus* warblers present identification problems (e.g. Green *P. nitidus*, Greenish *P. trochiloides* and Two-barred Greenish *P. plumbeitarsus*; Arctic *P. borealis* and Greenish; Greenish and Chiffchaff *P. collybita*) and these are gradually becoming unravelled as top-class field observers travel abroad (especially to Asia) more frequently. To co-ordinate the rapidly accumulating identification information, S. C. Madge has agreed to act as the central main author of a paper in *British Birds* which will collect together and assess the opinions of a wide range of observers. The paper will cover all species of *Phylloscopus* warbler which have occurred (or seem likely to occur in the future) in the western Palearctic. Anyone able to contribute helpful comments, field-notes on lesser-known species or other assistance will receive acknowledgment, and full credit in the eventual paper. Please write to S. C. Madge, 1 Caudle Hill, Fairburn, Knottingley, West Yorkshire WF11 9JQ.

Bats in Britain We hope that ornithologists will be able to help ITE/NCC mammalogists to document colonies of bats (Chiroptera), which seem to have declined as a result of the cold summer of 1978 and the long, cold winter of 1978/79. Bats emerging from colonies should be counted on two or three evenings each year between 20th June and 10th July. Details of the survey, recording forms and post-paid labels are available from Dr R. E. Stebbings, Institute of Terrestrial Ecology, Monks Wood Experimental Station, Abbots Ripton, Huntingdon PE17 2LS.

News and comment

Peter Conder and Mike Evèrett

'Atlas of Seabirds at Sea' The Nature Conservancy Council and the Seabird Group have launched a project aimed at recording seabirds in the habitat where least is known about them: out at sea. One main aim is to produce an *Atlas of Seabirds at Sea*, showing the distribution (and perhaps density) on and over the continental shelf waters around Britain and Ireland. A knowledge of the patterns of location and abundance of seabirds is vital in oilspill contingency planning.

A scheme of recording, based mainly on a Canadian system, has been tested in British waters from a variety of vessels, drilling rigs and oil- and gas-production platforms. Basically, the team requires two types of data: environmental conditions and information on the birds themselves. The raw data will be coded, and stored on the computer of Aberdeen University; a programme will give distribution maps for

each species in each month, and, slowly, a composite picture will be built up. As yet, there can be no completion date for this atlas.

Any birdwatcher going out to sea—even on the shortest trips to offshore islands—can help towards the completion of the atlas by collecting seabird data on standard forms. Details of the scheme are available from the Seabirds at Sea Team, 17 Rubislaw Terrace, Aberdeen AB1 1XE.

Director for the IWC The Irish Wildbird Conservancy, which is Ireland's largest voluntary nature conservation organisation, formed by an amalgamation of all national bird organisations in Ireland 12 years ago, has decided that the time has come to appoint a full-time director. Up to now, the IWC has been run exclusively by volunteers, but, with over 2,000 members and all the work involved, its council has decided to take



174. Presentation of inscribed salver and cheque for £100 to the 1979 'Bird Photograph of the Year' winner, Don Smith (right), by Jeffery Boswall, May 1980 (*Macmillan Journals Ltd*)

a risk and appoint a paid director. His first function will be to increase membership so that, at the end of a five year period, for which the generosity of sponsors from Irish business and the Irish Department of Education has provided the director's salary, the IWC will be self-supporting.

Bird Photograph of the Year 1979 The award presentation to Don Smith (plate 174) was made by Jeffery Boswall at a reception in London on 1st May.

BOC's 100th Bulletin The first part of the 100th volume of the *Bulletin of the British Ornithologists' Club* was published in March 1980 and comes 12 years before the club attains its centenary (the club had published several special volumes). This issue contains a history of the club, reminiscences by long-serving members and a series of papers on ornithological events in the last 50 years within different zoogeographical regions. This excellent special issue can be obtained (price £4, post free) from Dr D. W. Snow, Zoological Museum, Tring, Hertfordshire HP23 9AP.

YOC's 100,000th member The Young Ornithologists' Club, the junior branch of the RSPB, has just enrolled its 100,000th member: Stephen Childs of Leyton, London. The YOC was developed 15 years ago from the earlier Junior Bird Recorders' Club. For many years, the growth of the YOC was restricted by the size of the subsidy put in by the RSPB to compensate for the low rate of subscription. As soon as the subscription was

raised, however, and the club became self-supporting, its growth and range of activities have been as impressive as those of its parent body. The membership of 100,000 is a triumph for the YOC and the RSPB, but particularly for Peter Holden who has been its National Organiser for nearly all of its 15 years.

'Environmental Conservation in Gibraltar' This is the title of a report on the conservation of the natural environment of Gibraltar published by the Gibraltar Museum and the Gibraltar Environmental Group. It is a survey of the habitats, animals and plants on the Rock, the problems that beset them, and recommendations for remedial action. It is a 16-page document, well produced and a credit to all those who did the original thinking and to the production team. No price is given, but the address of the Gibraltar Museum is 18-20 Bomb House Lane, Gibraltar.

Dyfed Wildlife Appeal This appeal by the West Wales Naturalists' Trust for £60,000 for the purchase of reserves has passed the target figure, but the trust has decided to continue with its fund-raising, since it now has more new reserves in view.

Wildlife Link The first meeting of the Wildlife Link Committee of the Committee for Environmental Conservation (CoEnCo) was held under the chairmanship of Lord Melchett. The committee provides a forum to discuss wildlife issues (which was once the

function of the now extinct Council of Nature).

'Wildlife Sound' Those interested in recording wildlife sounds should know of this journal published by the Wildlife Sound Recording Society (annual subscription: £5; hon. secretary: R. Boughton, Dipper Beck, Ennerdale Bridge, Ennerdale, Cumbria). The current issue, which is a duplicated 44-page, A4-size magazine, contains letters, articles, reviews of tapes, test reports on equipment, and so on.

Cambridge in Norway The report of the Cambridge Norwegian Expedition 1978 is another impressive report from a university 'long vac' expedition. It describes the activities of the expedition, which was based at Dyranut on the Hardangervidda (60° 22'N 7° 30'E) from 7th June to 26th July. The report includes a botanical survey, results of bird census work, studies on Dotterel *Charadrius morinellus*, Purple Sandpiper *Calidris maritima*, and Great Snipe *Gallinago media*, as well as other notes. Keith Brockie's illustrations are excellent. The leader was John Innes, Christ's College, Cambridge from whom the report can be obtained, price £1 post free.

'Ornithological Sites around Doncaster'

The silver jubilee of the Doncaster and District Ornithological Society has been commemorated by the publication not only of an enlarged number of the DDOS's regular journal *Lapwing*, but also by the first of a special series of *Lapwing* entitled *Ornithological Sites around Doncaster*, edited by Martin Limbert, 23 Brockenhurst Road, Hatfield, Doncaster DN7 6SH. It costs £1 post free. This useful publication results from work undertaken during the society's local habitats survey and also under the BTO's Register of Ornithological Sites. It details 23 sites, but does not claim to cover everything of ornithological interest in the district.

New bird recorders for Huntingdonshire and Northumberland

Following the resignation of Julian Limbani, the recorder for the Huntingdon and Peterborough county districts of Cambridgeshire is now M. R. Coates, 10 Latham Avenue, Orton Longueville, Peterborough PE2 0AD; in Northumberland, Bryan Galloway's successor is A. Heavisides, 8 Lelord Place, Kirkhill, Morpeth, Northumberland.

Opinions expressed in this feature are not necessarily those of the editors of British Birds

Recent reports

K. Allsopp and R. A. Hume

These are largely unchecked reports, not authenticated records

This report covers April, plus a few early May records; except where otherwise stated, all dates refer to April.

Throughout the month, the weather patterns were dominated by anticyclones: for long periods, one was centred to the west, blocking the westward-moving Atlantic depressions and bringing cold Arctic air in from the north. Consequently, the summer migrants did not begin to arrive in appreciable numbers until early May. For a short period however, from 11th to 16th, the high pressure moved westwards into Europe, bringing in warm air from the south and weather fronts into western European coastal areas, affecting migration. The most obvious birds involved were **Hoopoes** *Upupa epops*, arriving in south coast areas from Cape Clear Island (Co. Cork) to Kent and subsequently in inland areas. About 30 were reported in all, but many more would have been involved



in the movement. **Black Terns** *Chlidonias niger* appeared in small numbers at inland reservoirs across the country; **Purple Herons** *Ardea purpurea* were found at Chapel Pits (Lincolnshire), Hastings (East Sussex), and at Heacham and Snettisham (Norfolk); and two **Night Herons** *Nycticorax nycticorax* at Marshside (Merseyside). Passerine rarities included three **Tawny Pipits** *Anthus campestris* on St Mary's (Isles of Scilly) and at Winterton and Weyborne (Norfolk), while later, on 19th, **Red-throated Pipits** *A. cervinus* were found at Thorney Island (West Sussex) and Frampton (Gloucestershire), with a further record during easterly weather on 3rd May at Sevenoaks (Kent). A lone **Icterine Warbler** *Hippolais icterina* on Blakeney Point (Norfolk) was the only unusual warbler reported during the southerlies.

Other interesting passerines reported during the month were **Rock Pipits** *Anthus*

spinoletta of the nominate, alpine race at Neston (Cheshire) with a maximum of 22 on 11th, and **Serins** *Serinus serinus* with four individuals at St Catherine's Point (Isle of Wight) and others at Beachy Head (East Sussex) and Portland (Dorset). At the last locality, a **Red-rumped Swallow** *Hirundo daurica* appeared on 20th, where it obligingly perched on wires (another was found at Abberton Reservoir (Essex) on 6th May), and, on the following day, a large fall of birds at Dungeness (Kent) included a **Black-eared Wheatear** *Oenanthe hispanica*. Two unusual records came from Finstown (Orkney): a **Hawfinch** *Coccothraustes coccothraustes* on 1st (after a dead one was reported the previous day) and later, in the same garden, a male **Parrot Crossbill** *Loxia pytyopsittacus*.

An **Alpine Swift** *Apus melba* at Ventnor (Isle of Wight) on 8th, during a period of strong northerlies, demonstrates what can occur even during the unlikely conditions.

Wading birds

The **Little Egret** *Egretta garzetta* at Kingsbridge (Devon) stayed on into April and another was reported from Fawley (Hampshire) on 22nd. A **Great White Egret** *E. alba* at Caerlaverock (Dumfries) on 8th and a second **Glossy Ibis** *Plegadis falcinellus* at Stodmarsh (Kent) on 7th were both considered of doubtful origin. The first spring record of an **Upland Sandpiper** *Bartramia longicauda* was reported from St Kilda (Western Isles) on 24th, at a time when weather fronts across the Atlantic may well have assisted a crossing. Another Nearctic species, the **Long-billed Dowitcher** *Limnodromus scolopaceus*, was also recorded: the one at Old Hall Marsh (Essex) stayed throughout the month, another was reported at Rutland Water (Leicestershire) in the first week of May, and one not specifically identified was seen at Winterton in mid April. Notable reports of European waders included a spate of **Kentish Plovers** *Charadrius alexandrinus*, at Dungeness on 6th, Cley (Norfolk) on 12th, Havergate (Suffolk) on 14th, then three at Pegwell Bay (Kent) on 3rd May, two at Ferrybridge (Dorset) and one at Frampton on 5th May. There was also a **Temminck's Stint** *Calidris temminckii* at Arundel (West Sussex) on 4th May, while **Dotterels** *Charadrius morinellus* were also reported at their usual passage resting places near Royston (Hertfordshire), Cambridge, and Odiham (Hampshire).



Raptors

A few encouraging reports of **Montagu's Harriers** *Circus pygargus* included one during the first week of April at Bradwell (Essex) and then singles in the New Forest (Hampshire) and near Salisbury (Wiltshire) on 3rd May. **Marsh Harriers** *C. aeruginosus* were more widespread, with reports from Filey Brigg (North Yorkshire) on 13th, Marazion (Cornwall) at about the same time, Burton Point (Cheshire) on 27th and Chew Valley Lake (Avon) and Fleet Pond (Hampshire) on 4th May. Ireland's first record of a **Black Kite** *Milvus migrans* occurred at Garryvoe (Co. Cork), present from 19th, and another appeared briefly at Lodmoor (Dorset) on 2nd May. During the warm southerly weather, a **Goshawk** *Accipiter gentilis* occurred at Constantine (Cornwall) on 13th and a **Honey Buzzard** *Pernis apivorus* at Neston on 15th, followed by another at Sandwich (Kent) on 24th.

Seabirds

Little Auks *Alle alle* continued to be present into April after the winter influx, as were a few **Iceland Gulls** *Larus glaucoideus*, and three **Mediterranean Gulls** *L. melanocephalus* were observed following a plough on the Isle of Wight on 9th. **Laughing Gulls** *L. atricilla* were seen at Lowestoft (Suffolk) on 3rd and Lodmoor on 13th, while close by, at Radipole Lake (Dorset), a **Franklin's Gull** *L. pipixcan* was reported on the same day.

Waterfowl

The **Pied-billed Grebe** *Podilymbus podiceps* at Studland Heath (Dorset) was well seen on 27th, and the wintering **King Eiders** *Somateria spectabilis* and **Surf Scoters** *Melanitta perspicillata* in Scotland and Ireland remained well into April. Five **Ring-necked Ducks** *Aythya collaris* were present in Ireland



on 10th, another was reported from Messingham (South Humberside) on 19th, and a **Blue-winged Teal** *Anas discors* was seen at Fleet Pond on 4th May.

Rails

A rare **Baillon's Crake** *Porzana pusilla* was reported from Slapton (Devon) on 19th, while a **Corncrake** *Crex crex* was a surprise find on 5th at Stanpit Marsh (Dorset).

Latest news

First half June: **Little Egret** and **Black-winged Stilt** *Himantopus himantopus* Southend (Essex); **Pectoral Sandpiper** *Calidris melanotos* and **Long-tailed Skua** *Stercorarius longicaudus* Fair Isle; **Caspian** *Sterna caspia* and **White-winged Black Terns** *Chlidonias leucopterus* Hickling (Norfolk); **Bee-eater** *Merops apiaster* Earsdon (Tyne & Wear); **Woodchat Shrike** *Lanius senator* Ipswich.

Reviews

Silent Death. By C. J. Cadbury. RSPB, Sandy, 1980. 27 pages; 1 black-and-white plate. £2.00.

Birds of prey are seriously threatened in many parts of the world. In Britain, all have been fully protected for some years; moreover, the agricultural pesticides which were a major threat to the Peregrine and other species in the 1950s and early 1960s have largely been brought under control. Yet, before we become too complacent, it is well to remember that shooting and trapping of some species has continued despite strict legal protection. Now, this admirably detailed report shows that there is a serious additional hazard through the deliberate misuse of poison-baits. During 1966-68, poison was identified in 338 incidents and suspected in a further 65; clearly, however, the total must be far higher, as the chances of detection in hilly country or on large private estates must be small. Yet, even this limited sample showed that 53 species of birds (and six mammals) were involved, including many of the rare birds of prey, such as Red Kite, Marsh and Hen Harrier, Goshawk, Golden Eagle and Peregrine. Baits used included meat, eggs and grain, with mevinphos, alpha-chloralose and strychnine as the favoured poisons.

This illegal slaughter poses threats to the Golden Eagle and to the remnant population of the Red Kite, and prevents the spread of others, such as the Buzzard, into areas where game is managed. Poisoned baits can legally be used only with a Government licence; the illegal use of such highly toxic chemicals is dangerous and random, killing haphazardly non-target species such as dogs, and perhaps, one day, human beings. The RSPB urges an immediate programme of education, improved enforcement, tighter legislation and restrictions on the availability of these deadly poisons. The influential Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution agreed, in their 1979 report, that this deliberate misuse of poisoned baits was reprehensible. The Government should act now.

STANLEY CRAMP

Birds of Britain and Europe. By Nicholas Hammond and Michael Everett. Ward Lock, and Pan Books, London, 1980. 256 pages; 643 colour plates; 359 distribution maps. Hardback, £9.95; paperback, £5.95.

The 359 species are illustrated by colour-photographs, with accompanying European distribution maps (sometimes out-of-date or inaccurate), small silhouettes by Rob Hume, and brief texts; authors and publishers have commendably chosen to use a natural sequence (Peters's, not the now-more-familiar Voous order).

If readers of *British Birds* purchase this book, it will surely be for the photographs rather than for the texts, since these latter average only 100 words for each species (31 on identification, 14 on voice, 17 on habitat, 11 on food and 27 on breeding). The photographic reproduction is seldom poor, usually good and sometimes stunning; the photographs themselves are usually well chosen and most are not old, rehashed 'favourites'. Availability of suitable portraits does, however, apparently dominate the book at times, with, for example, Arctic Warbler featured, but no mention or illustration of a Greenish. Thus, we still await the ultimate identification guide—that one with full reliable text comprehensively illustrated by colour photographs—but this is more than a mere coffee-table book for idle browsing; many of the photographs provide useful reference material for the serious birdwatcher. Design is good; this most attractive book deserves to become well-thumbed by novice and expert alike. In view of the hundreds of colour photographs, the price is very reasonable.

J. T. R. SHARROCK

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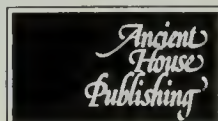
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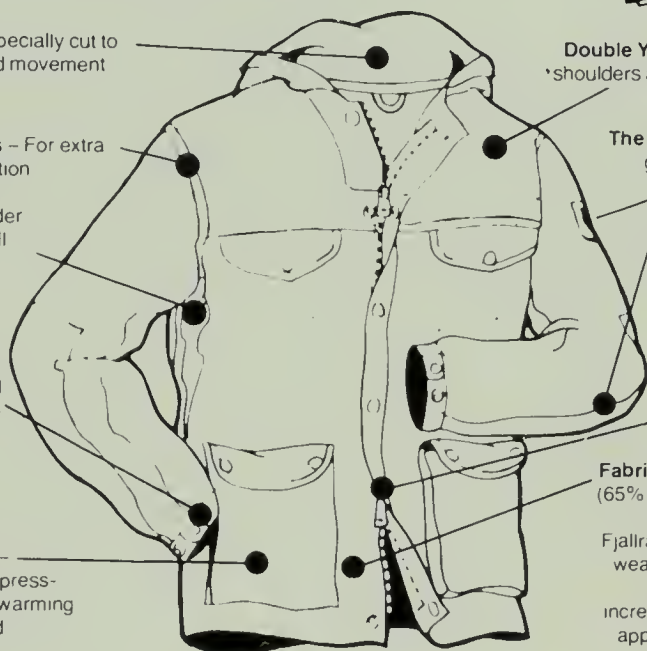
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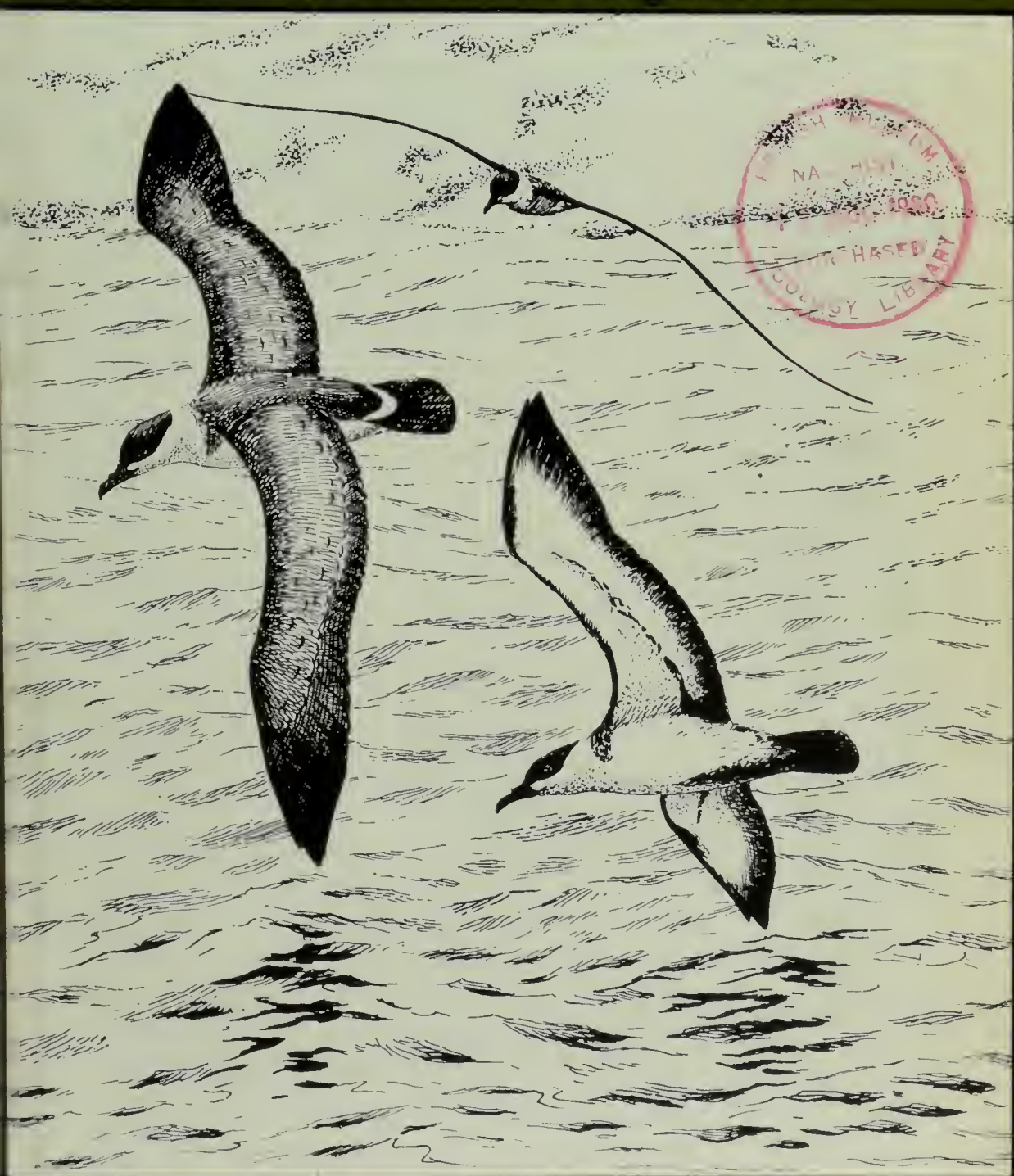
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Volume 73 Number 8 August 1980



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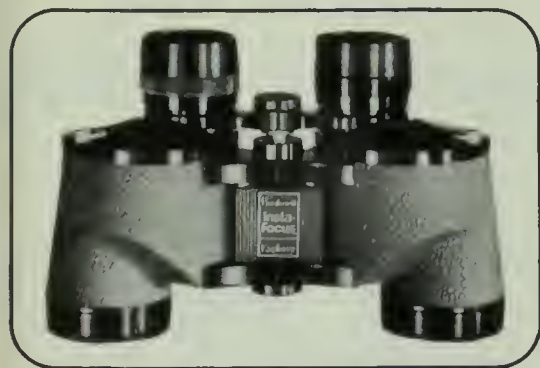
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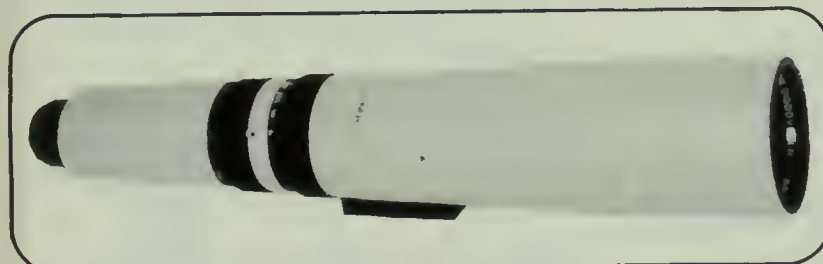
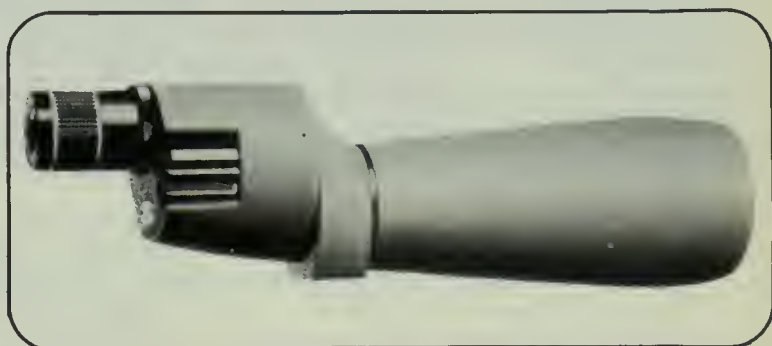
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British Birds

VOLUME 73 NUMBER 8 AUGUST 1980

'BB' goes independent



This is, perhaps, the most important editorial in the journal's 74-year history. We hope that all subscribers will read it

Since its inception, *British Birds* has been run by a commercial publishing firm: first by H. F. & G. Witherby Ltd and, since 1st April 1973, by Macmillan Journals Ltd. Now, as from 1st August 1980, the journal is completely independent and will be run by the present editorial board (Stanley Cramp, Peter Grant, Malcolm Ogilvie and Tim Sharrock). The new company will be on a non-profit basis: if any surplus is achieved, it will be devoted to providing a better journal.

Macmillan Journals Ltd were good publishers for *BB* and in many ways we regret leaving that happy stable. Relations remain most amicable, and we shall, indeed, be retaining some of our links with the Macmillan organisation, as we hope the occasional book will visibly demonstrate.

With a circulation increase from 3,400 in 1976 to over 8,000 at the end of 1979, we believed that the journal could not be in a healthier state. Financially, however, this was not the case. As part of a large company,

with high overheads, the journal was losing several tens of thousands of pounds a year. To make the journal viable, it would have been necessary, for instance, to reduce at once the number of pages per issue by 20% and to increase the price by, perhaps, 70%. This simultaneous lowering of standards and huge increase in price clearly spelt potential disaster.

We decided, therefore, to take up the Macmillan offer for us to purchase the journal. Run independently, with minimal overheads, we believe that we can not only keep price increases much lower, but also currently maintain and in the long term improve the journal's size and quality.

We do, however, start with a disadvantage, for, although $\frac{7}{12}$ ths of the way through this year, we have less than $\frac{5}{12}$ ths of the year's subscription income with which to produce the last five issues and an index.

We must now rely wholly on our subscribers' loyalty—your loyalty—to see us through this critical period. Even if your subscription is not yet due, please help our current financial problems by resubscribing now—in advance of your usual renewal date—using the form in the centre of this issue (where you can indicate the month when your subscription will start). Those who feel that they cannot help us in this way will get their renewal reminders as usual.

We shall continue to provide good issues but, inevitably, must at once raise the subscription rates, although we have decided to make no change in the concessionary rate to up-and-coming birdwatchers who are members of the RSPB's Young Ornithologists' Club.

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STANLEY CRAMP, PETER GRANT, MALCOLM OGILVIE
and J. T. R. SHARROCK

175-177. Previous page: Stanley Cramp; Malcolm Ogilvie and Peter Grant; Dr J. T. R. Sharrock (*Macmillan Journals Ltd; Marie Xeridat; S. C. L. Proctor*)

House Sparrows down coal mines

D. Summers-Smith



The House Sparrow *Passer domesticus* is unique among birds in its close association with man. It is regularly to be found living in large buildings such as railway stations, factories, breweries and stores. There is normally ready access to such buildings; the birds move freely in and out, using the buildings for breeding and roosting, and even obtaining some of their food there from scraps provided by man. In some circumstances, they even seem to spend their whole lives indoors. Such appeared to be the case with a small flock of House Sparrows which lived, some years ago, in the old Europa Building (now Terminal 2) at London Heathrow Airport; being an air-conditioned building, the birds could not move freely in and out, and seemed to spend most of their time in the area of the snack bar, feeding on crumbs and resting in the concealed lighting recesses in the ceiling.

In view of such circumstances, it is perhaps not unexpected that occasional House Sparrows should find their way into coal mines and be trapped, but it is surprising that they can survive in such an environment. There are, however, a number of records.

In May 1956, the following report appeared in the press: 'Sparrows nesting hundreds of feet underground at the bottom of the pit shaft at Linton Colliery, Northumberland, are being fed by miners.' I tried to obtain further details, but was unsuccessful. Following this, there was a report on the BBC Northern News on 21st March 1962 of a pair of House Sparrows building a nest at the foot of the shaft at Waldrige D Pit, Chester Moor Colliery, Co. Durham, 596 feet (182 m) below ground level. Subsequent investigation revealed that a pair had been first seen underground on 12th March and had been feeding on crushed oats from the pit stables and bread crumbs provided by the miners; they were also seen drinking water that had collected at the bottom of the shaft. The female was caught on the night of 29th/30th March—on the instructions of the mine manager, who did not consider that the birds could survive—and released above ground; the male was not seen again after that date. These sparrows in Waldrige D remained within 150 m of the shaft bottom, which was lit continuously by electric light, except for the periods from 06.00 on Saturdays to 06.00 on Sundays and again from 12.00 to 22.00 on Sundays. The manager informed

me that, contrary to the news report, although there was a certain amount of hay and straw lying around, there was no evidence of the birds having attempted to build a nest. In addition to this incident, the manager had also known of two previous occasions when House Sparrows had been found down the pit, but he did not have further details.

The next occurrence was also in Co. Durham, where, in March 1963, a single House Sparrow was apparently living quite happily at a depth of 300 m in Horden Colliery. This bird had been adopted by the miners, who provided food, and had become quite tame (Green 1963). Once again, unfortunately, I was unable to obtain further details.

Although from the above it is clear that there have been a number of occasions when House Sparrows have found their way into coal mines and have managed to survive for at least short periods, the available information on these occurrences is somewhat limited. It was thus fascinating to learn of a further occurrence and this time to be able to obtain a much more complete story. In this case not only have two birds been down the mine for almost three years, and a third for almost two years, but, even more surprising, a pair has actually bred down the mine.

Two House Sparrows appeared at the bottom of the skip shaft in Frickley Colliery, South Elmsall, Yorkshire, in June 1975, and a third the following June. It is most probable that they were recently fledged, inexperienced immatures when they found their respective ways into the mine. It is also highly probable that they came down the skip shaft, since the top of this is open to the air and accessible to the numerous House Sparrows that live in the surrounding colliery buildings. Mine ventilation is by induced draught through the man shaft, access to which is only through airlock doors. Although the two shafts are separated only by a couple of hundred metres, access between them underground is by an airlock consisting of four doors in series, only one of which is opened at a time; it is thus extremely unlikely that, if the sparrows had descended by the man shaft, they could have made their way underground to the bottom of the skip shaft.

The skip shaft bottom is at 640 m. It is continuously illuminated by strip lighting and manned by the onsetter at the bottom of the shaft 24 hours a day from Monday to Friday; during the weekends, maintenance men visit the area, but, in general, it is a quiet part of the mine. The sparrows live in an area consisting of a tunnel about 6 m high and 9 m broad and some distance along a roadway going off at right angles to the man shaft via the airlock. In all, they appear not to move more than about 100 m, which is the extent of the illuminated area accessible to them. Food is provided by the onsetters. Some animal life is present: occasional flies (Diptera), including midges, and moths (Lepidoptera), no doubt drawn down with the ventilation air, and parasites on the mine house mice *Mus musculus*. The birds have been seen catching moths, but obviously they could not have survived without deliberate provision of food. A small amount of water collects at the bottom of the shaft, but, in any event, water is also provided with the food.

In autumn 1977, the sparrows were seen collecting scraps of material. Grass was provided and a pair built a nest behind a girder in the centre of the roof. The birds bred there and three young were present in the nest on

5th and 14th November. Later, the three young fledged, but disappeared shortly afterwards. It seems probable that this could only have been the result of a dietary deficiency as nestlings, when, for the first few days of life, a certain amount of animal food seems to be essential. Despite the regular provision of food and water, the birds have in no way become tame and do not allow a close approach.

I was allowed to visit the mine on 10th March 1978; I was informed at that time that the original three birds were still present, though I saw only one, a male which appeared to be in excellent condition.

The temperature at the foot of the skip shaft is fairly constant at 15-20°C and there seems little way in which the birds could be aware of either diurnal or seasonal changes. No detailed observations on roosting have been made, but it was said that they were active during one shift for a period and then the activity changed to a different shift, suggesting that the birds had adapted to a cycle different from—and apparently greater than—24 hours.

As already stated, it seems most probable that the sparrows entered as naïve juveniles, possibly trying to catch moths on the skip. It also seems likely that the first two were males and the third a female. It is difficult to see what triggered breeding. If the third bird was in fact a female, she should have reached breeding condition in the normal way in May-June 1977, after about 49 weeks (340 days); in fact, breeding was delayed until about 71 weeks (500 days). If the birds' breeding rhythm were controlled by a cycle of activity and roosting, a simple sum would suggest that they are operating on a 35-hour 'day'.

The House Sparrow is a very successful species. The fact that it is able to survive in such an alien environment as a coal mine, even allowing that food and water is deliberately provided, gives further testimony to its remarkable adaptability.

Acknowledgments

I should like to express my thanks to T. A. Whitwell, Manager of Chester South Moor Colliery in 1962, for the very full details he provided of the incident in Waldrige D pit. Again, I am most grateful to J. E. Wood, Area Director, Doncaster Area, National Coal Board, for permission to visit Frickley Colliery and to the Mine Manager and his staff for their friendly help and co-operation.

Summary

House Sparrows *Passer domesticus* have been reported living in coal mines at Linton Colliery, Northumberland, in 1956; at a depth of 182 m in Chester Moor Colliery, Co. Durham, in 1962; and at a depth of 300 m in Horden Colliery, Co. Durham, in 1963. The best-documented record is from Frickley Colliery, Yorkshire, where two and later three sparrows lived at a depth of 640 m from summer 1975 to at least spring 1978; in November 1977, a pair nested and reared three young, which, however, did not survive. It seems likely that the sparrows entered the mines as naïve juveniles.

Reference

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Eleonora's Falcon: new to Britain and Ireland

A. Copleston and K. W. Horton



Cabin Hill at Formby Point is part of the old southwest-Lancashire dune system, now in Merseyside. Contained in the area is a pool which evaporates in summer to become a damp patch in which insects breed, thus attracting birds.

On 8th August 1977, K. W. Horton was viewing the 'pool' from a dune roughly 400 m to the north. Black-headed Gulls *Larus ridibundus* and hirundines hawked insects in hot, windless conditions. At about 15.00 GMT, he noticed a large, dark bird flying towards him on drooping wings. Thinking it to be an Arctic Skua *Stercorarius parasiticus*, which would have been unusual in the calm weather, he attempted to obtain better views. He then realised that the bird was a very dark falcon resembling in size a male Peregrine *Falco peregrinus*, but having a much longer tail and longer, more sharply pointed wings. A nearby Kestrel *F. tinnunculus* offered useful comparison for size, wingspan, flight-style and plumage. The larger, darker falcon had slow, deep, relaxed wingbeats in contrast with the rapid 'winnowing' action of the Kestrel. It did not hover, but repeatedly flew back and forth over the pool, sometimes hanging in the air with tail fanned and feet extended to catch insects. It frequently glided on lowered wings.

Only general plumage features were discernible, the upperparts being a dark sooty-brown, with the tail and rump slightly paler and warmer, the malar stripes dark, and the cheeks and underparts a lighter brown. The underwing-coverts were very dark. Lack of strong tonal contrasts created a blackish appearance, especially at longer range. In the process of identification, juvenile and melanistic Hobbies *F. subbuteo* were eliminated because of the bird's greater size, proportionately longer tail and relaxed flight-style. Red-footed Falcon *F. vespertinus* was also too small and compact. Species popular with falconers were considered, but Lanner *F. biarmicus*, Laggar *F. jugger* and Saker *F. cherrug* were all discounted mainly on plumage differences and feeding habits. Dark-phase Eleonora's Falcon *F. eleonora* was the only bird which seemed to fit: a species which was unfamiliar to KWH.

When, after an hour, the falcon became distant, KWH returned home to study field guides and consulted Porter *et al.* (1974). The description of the slow 'foraging' flight of Eleonora's fitted that of the Formby bird, and the dark underwing-coverts were also a major identifying feature.

The following day, A. Adams, AC and M. Garner accompanied KWH to Cabin Hill, and, at approximately 09.30 hours, the falcon was seen flying towards a copse, with a Kestrel in pursuit. All observers were impressed by the distinctive differences between the two birds at 300-400m. The Eleonora's Falcon was more powerful and well able to outfly the Kestrel, despite the latter's quicker wingbeats. The Eleonora's disappeared behind the copse, but was relocated on a branch facing the observers. Views through binoculars revealed considerable detail at 115m in good light. KWH then advanced to test the bird's approachability and to obtain views of it in flight. At about 50m, it became alert, then rose and turned briefly sideways in a horizontal position, showing that its wings reached to the tip of its tail. It then took off and began hawking insects overhead.

The following details were noted:

SIZE, PROPORTIONS AND GENERAL CHARACTERS Very dark falcon, size of male Peregrine, but slimmer and less muscular in build, with wings proportionately longer and more finely pointed. Slightly rounded tail, of Kestrel-like proportions, about one-quarter as long again as width of wing base, looking narrow when folded: more rakish outline than Hobby, Peregrine or Red-footed Falcon. Flight silhouette very angular, not bowed, with characteristic sharp bend at carpal joints. No moult apparent. **UPPERPARTS** Forehead to nape dark sooty-brown, without pale nape patches. Mantle and upperwing slightly darker and unmarked. Uppertail and rump paler and warmer-toned, with rufous tint in direct sunlight. **HEAD** Malar stripes dark sooty-brown, between those of Hobby and Peregrine in width. Cheeks and ear-coverts cinnamon brown, cleanly rounded in outline. **UNDERPARTS** Chin, throat and rest of underside, including undertail, uniform cinnamon-brown. Darker brown streaking from upper breast to belly, prominent, but less heavy than on Hobby. Tail finely barred darker brown, with dark terminal band. Undertail-coverts and tibial feathers apparently unstreaked. **UNDERWING** Flight feathers darker shade of body colour, darkening further towards tips of primaries. KWH detected marginally paler area between coverts and hindwing, but no strong dark trailing edge. Flight feathers marked by

several rows of darker spots, including extreme trailing edge, forming finely barred pattern. Coverts dark sooty-brown, mottled darker. Lack of strong contrast in plumage accentuated general darkness at long range. **BARE PARTS** Bill light steely-blue; eye dark brown; eye-ring dull white; cere bluish-white; legs and feet bright butter-yellow. **FLIGHT AND BEHAVIOUR** Although capable of considerable speed, sought insects in leisurely fashion for about 1½ hours. Flight pattern same back-and-forth of previous day, with slow, deep, relaxed wingbeats interspersed with long, slow glides on lowered wings angled sharply at carpal joint. During glides, rump feathers sometimes raised, head lowered and tail twisted in the pronounced manner of Red Kite *Milvus milvus*. This peculiar 'slow-motion' flight recalled that of larger raptors. Circling and soaring not employed. On sighting insect, falcon made accelerated dash, often at downward angle, on deep—but more rapid—wingbeats. Some zig-zagging, twisting and turning, the occasional stoop, and a complete side-roll were noted. Insect transferred from talons to bill in flight as falcon paused with fanned-out tail. Aerobatics less vigorous than Peregrine's, and lack of stiffness and tension in wing-action presented graceful flight characteristics. Distance covered was within a 400m radius, with the falcon frequently low overhead.

When the falcon went to rest, at approximately 11.15 hours, all observers were fully agreed that it was an Eleonora's Falcon, probably dark phase, although the smaller Sooty Falcon *F. concolor* had also been considered. AC had made sketches which were later used in the production of colour and

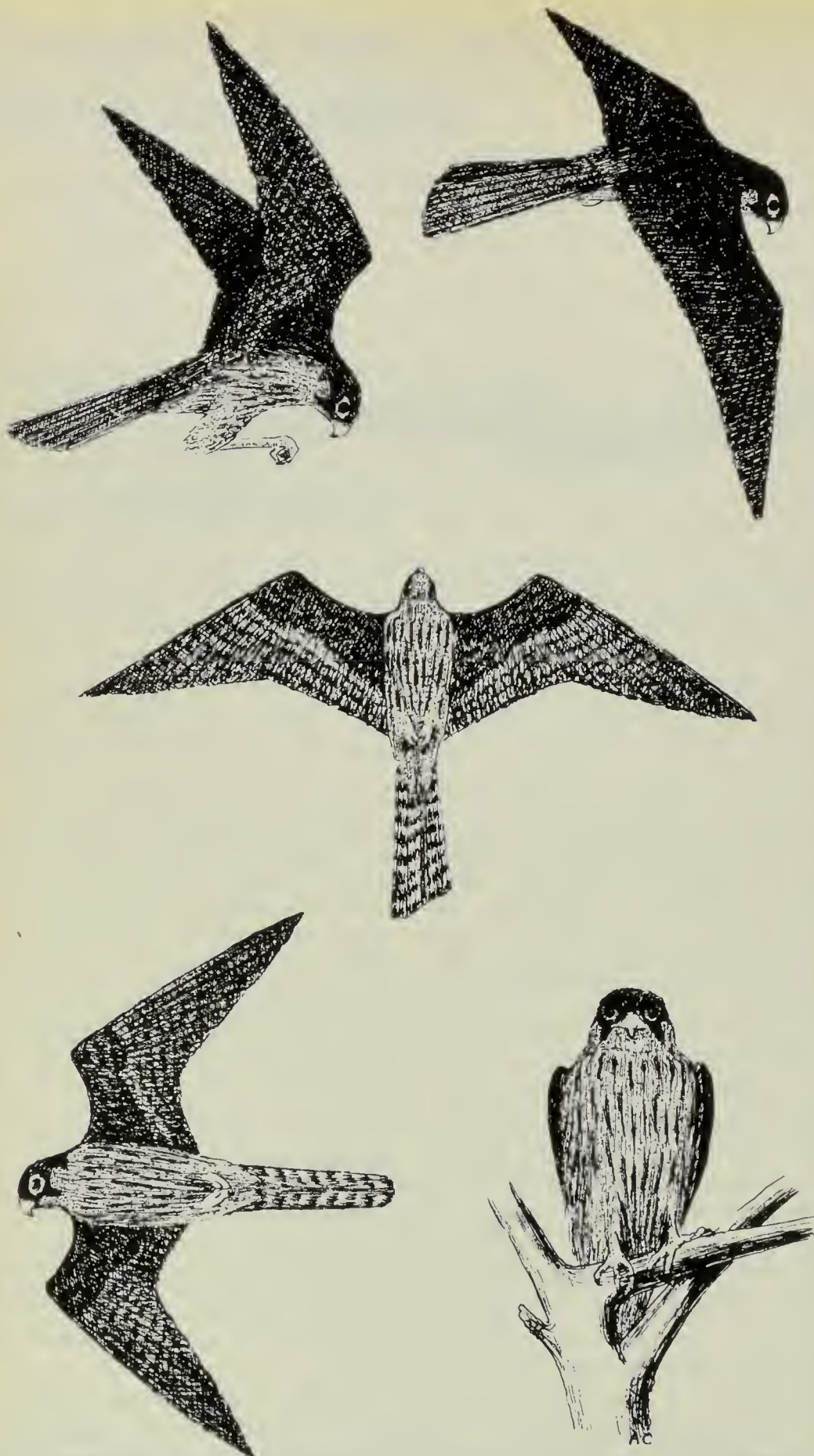


Fig. 1. First-summer Eleonora's Falcon *Falco eleonora* hunting and perched, Merseyside, August 1977; note sharp, angular outline, and tail-twisting (A. Copleston)

monochrome drawings. The questions of age and plumage phase, however, remained unresolved. Literature and illustrations proved confusing, as the plumage did not exactly fit any picture or description studied. There was doubt as to its origins, and escape from captivity was suspected. The falcon was not seen on subsequent days.

Establishing age and plumage-phase

In order to clarify the age and plumage questions, AC sent colour sketches to Dr Hartmut Walter, who ascertained that the mantle, upperwing-coverts and tertials were as an adult's, lacking pale markings, while the immature spotting and barring on underwing and tail were still present. He considered it to be a dark-phase approaching a sub-adult plumage of a type noted by him in Moroccan individuals, a hint to its possible origin. The BOU Records Committee deduced that it was in first-summer plumage (R. Hudson *in litt.*).

Escape likelihood

Captive Eleonora's Falcons were traced to the Midland Falconry Centre, Northamptonshire. A pair bred there in 1975, the young being exported to Canada. Both adults later died, the male having escaped shortly after the Formby sightings. The Centre pronounced the species unsuitable for falconry, and its hunting methods and insectivorous habits certainly render it unpopular.

No other legal or illegal imports or sales in Britain have emerged since the introduction in 1970 of the licensing system for importing birds of prey, and a licence issued in 1975 is not thought to have been used (T. P. Inskipp *in litt.*). This does not eliminate secretly kept, illegal imports yet undiscovered, nor suppressed zoo escapes. Lack of reference to the species in the International Zoo Yearbooks of 1971-79 suggests, however, that it is not commonly kept in zoos. Escape abroad was widely investigated, but no lost Eleonora's Falcons could be traced in any European country during 1977. The species is now protected in many countries. Since numbers of immatures routinely summer north of their home colonies (Dr H. Walter *in litt.*), it seemed reasonable to suppose that the Formby bird was a genuine vagrant.

Notes on the species

Eleonora's Falcon, named after a 14th-century Sardinian princess, was scientifically discovered much later, by Alberto Della Marmora in 1836. This rare social falcon, which feeds on birds and insects, has two main plumage phases, the light being told from dark by its pale throat and face patches; Vaughan (1961a) and Walter (1979) noted a few intermediates. Dark-phase nestlings are distinguished by their barred undertail-coverts (Stresemann 1943), but some rare all-dark individuals have occurred (Ristow 1975; Walter 1979). Clutches of one to four eggs resembling those of the European Hobby are usually laid on inaccessible cliff ledges on rocky islands and islets. Colonies range from two to two hundred pairs. The late nesting season begins in mid July, the young being

fed mainly on trans-Mediterranean migrants. The restricted breeding area extends from the Canary Islands to Morocco, and through the Mediterranean Basin to Cyprus. Migration to Madagascar and the Mascarene Islands begins in late autumn, although some routes are still speculative. Evidence of probable overwintering in the southern Aegean (Cant 1979) and possibly at Mogador (Walter 1979) has recently emerged. Dr Walter's latest estimate of the world population of Eleonora's Falcon is about 12,000 individuals, compared with Vaughan's (1961b) estimate of 'rather less than 4,000 birds'.

Vagrancy elsewhere

Vagrants have occurred in Corsica, Syria, Egypt, Lebanon, Israel and Libya. There have been 20 records in southern France, mostly since the 1950s, including three in 1977. They fall into two groups: May/June and August (and one in early October); Carp & Cheylan (1979) concluded that those in autumn were non-breeders or failed breeders and also that occurrences in southern France of light-phase Eleonora's Falcons were probably overlooked due to misidentification as Hobbies or Peregrines. One ringed in Morocco (Bernis 1966) was recovered in central Spain in 1970, and one ringed in Crete was discovered on the Black Sea coast of Turkey in June 1970 (Ristow 1975). There is also a Hungarian record of a dark-phase shot on 12th August 1964 (Ferenc 1978). According to Gätke (1900), one was caught in Heligoland, but the claim has been rejected (Glutz *et al.* 1971), partly on the grounds that it was too far north. The Formby bird is thus the northernmost accepted record.

Acknowledgments

The authors wish to express their thanks to Robert Hudson, Stanley Cramp and Peter Prokop for providing details of other vagrancies, to Eric Hardy for investigating escape possibilities, to Tim Inskipp and overseas correspondents for information on importation and captivity abroad, and to Dr Hartmut Walter for his help with the age and plumage factors.

Summary

A first-summer dark-phase Eleonora's Falcon *Falco eleonora* was seen at Formby Point, Merseyside, on 8th and 9th August 1977.

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Identification of Sharp-tailed Sandpipers

David Britton

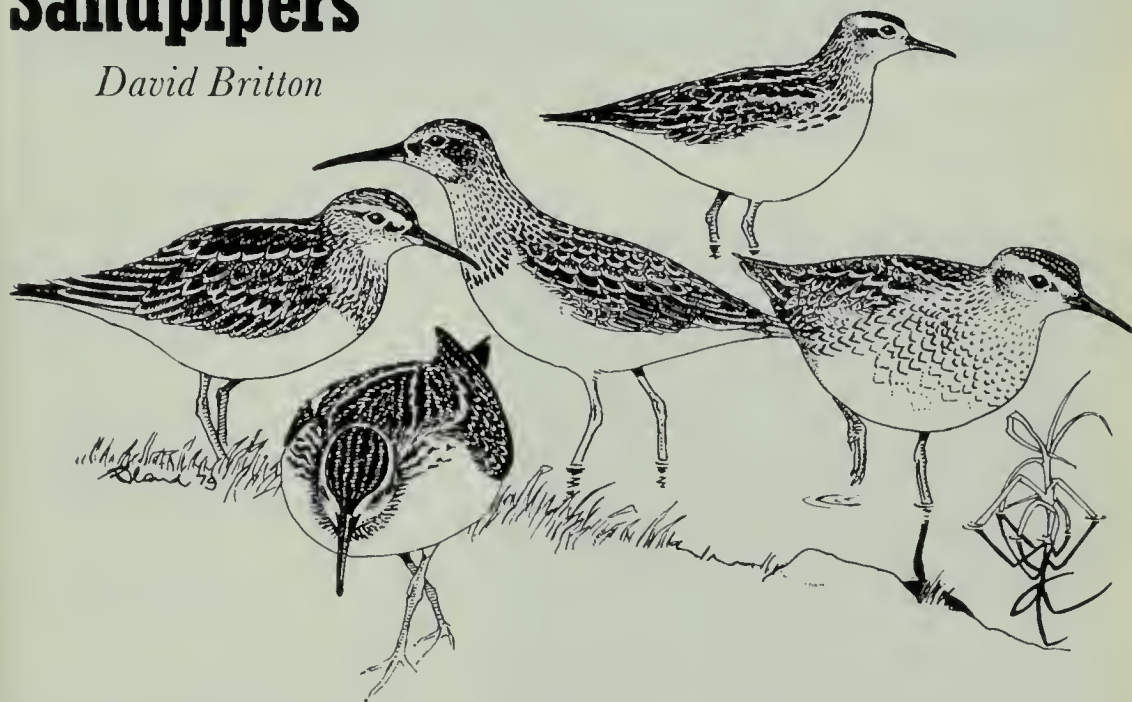


Fig. 1. Group of Sharp-tailed Sandpipers *Calidris acuminata* (juveniles, front and rear; summer adult, right) and Pectoral Sandpipers *C. melanotos* (juvenile, left; autumn adult, centre) showing common jizz: flattish back, pot belly, short legs, long rear-end, and smallish head on normally short (though sometimes surprisingly long) neck. Note, however, tendency of Sharp-tailed to appear larger, more portly, shorter-necked and flatter-crowned (Bryan Bland)

Two recent summer adult* Sharp-tailed Sandpipers *Calidris acuminata* were identified initially as Pectoral Sandpipers *C. melanotos* by observers with experience not only of Pectoral but also of juvenile Sharp-tailed. One, at Seal Sands, Cleveland, on 3rd September 1977, was watched for two hours by a dozen observers before it was identified as a Sharp-tailed. Another, on St Mary's, Isles of Scilly, from 20th to 29th September 1974, although conveniently accompanied by three Pectorals, was overlooked until 25th, by which time the 'four Pectorals' had been observed by many birdwatchers (Flumm 1975).

The first three British records, including two summer adults, were first identified as Pectorals, but the skins fortunately survived to be properly

* In this paper, 'summer adult' refers to adults in autumn which have not completed the autumn body moult, rather than to 'spring adults' in the bright fresh nuptial plumage acquired in early summer.

assigned to Sharp-tailed half a century later (Rivière 1930). A summer adult at Bedford in 1961 was initially reported as a ‘peculiar Pectoral’ (I. J. Ferguson-Lees *in litt.*). It is clear that summer adult Sharp-tailed can be—and doubtless has been—overlooked. Fortunately, individuals in winter and juvenile plumage are more obviously different from Pectoral.

This paper is concerned mainly with the field separation of the two species, rather than with the elimination of other waders, which is generally straightforward, but Purple Sandpiper *C. maritima* and Ruff *Philomachus pugnax* can cause difficulties and are discussed briefly. It is based on personal experience of one adult and one juvenile Sharp-tailed, the descriptions of all the British and Irish sight records, and an examination of three of the 19th-century specimens (the fourth could not be located). Pectoral Sandpiper details were taken from personal notes on over 30 individuals seen in Britain and others in the USA.

British and Irish records

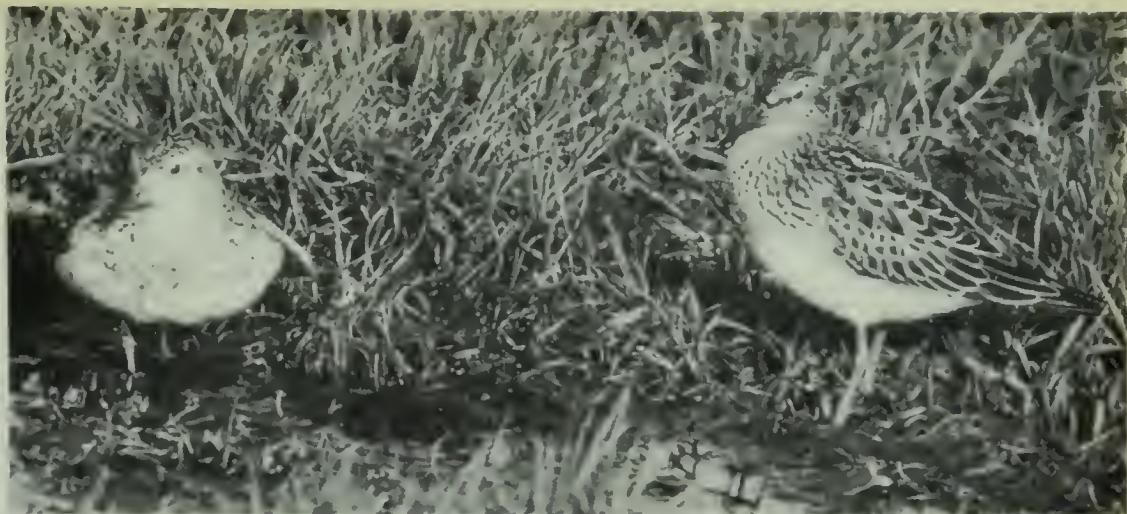
One previously accepted record, at Staines Reservoir, Surrey, on 28th September 1966 (*Brit. Birds* 60: 319), has been reconsidered by the Rarities Committee and, in the light of present knowledge, cannot now be regarded as fully proven; this decision is approved by the observer concerned. The remaining records up to 1978—one Irish and 14 British—are listed in table 1. All but two (January 1868 and April 1978) occurred between 6th August and 18th October, and nine were in eastern England. Of those in autumn, there have been nine summer adults, three juveniles and one first-winter; the high proportion of adults (69%) is unusual for a vagrant, particularly as summer adults are the most likely to be overlooked.

Table 1. British and Irish records of Sharp-tailed Sandpiper *Calidris acuminata* up to 1978
The bracketed references following three of the Norfolk records are the permanent accession numbers assigned by the Castle Museum, Norwich

	Age	Locality	Dates
1	Summer adult	Yarmouth, Norfolk	September 1848 (25.50)
2	Summer adult	Caister, Norfolk	16th September 1865 (45.87)
3	Not known	Terrington Marsh, Norfolk	9th January 1868
4	Summer adult	Breydon, Norfolk	29th August 1892 (125.937)
5	First-winter	Hamilton, Strathclyde	18th-21st October 1956
6	Summer adult	Bedford Sewage-farm, Bedfordshire	4th-11th September 1961
7	Summer adult	Cowpen Marsh, Cleveland	21st-24th August 1963
8	Juvenile	Ballycotton, Co. Cork	30th August 1973
9	Juvenile	Shotton, Clwyd	14th-24th October 1973
10	Juvenile	Morfa Harlech, Gwynedd	14th-15th October 1973
11	Summer adult	St Mary's, Scilly	20th-29th September 1974
12	Summer adult	Reading, Berkshire	17th-22nd August 1975
13	Summer adult	Staines Reservoir, Surrey	6th August 1976
14	Summer adult	Seal Sands, Cleveland	3rd September 1977
15	Winter adult	Langton Herring, Dorset	2nd April 1978

Moult

The two species have broadly similar moult cycles (Witherby *et al.* 1940). The body plumage of adults is moulted in autumn, Pectoral starting as early as August. The St Mary's adult Sharp-tailed was in summer plumage



178. Adult Sharp-tailed Sandpiper *Calidris acuminata* (left) with juvenile Pectoral Sandpiper *C. melanotos*, Scilly, September 1974 (*D. B. Hunt*). Superficial resemblance strong, but note messy lower breast markings, scallops rather than streaks, and clean pale supercilium most prominent behind eye; looks pale-faced, but this feature more useful on juveniles

179. Adult Sharp-tailed Sandpiper *Calidris acuminata*, Scilly, September 1974 (*D. B. Hunt*). Note messy sides of breast, dark ventral streaking, prominent supercilium behind eye and rather flat crown; otherwise, resemblance to Pectoral Sandpiper *C. melanotos* is strong, with similar shape, pale bar on inner wing and pale mantle and scapular lines



180. Adult Sharp-tailed Sandpiper *Calidris acuminata*, Scilly, September 1974 (*D. B. Hunt*). Identifiable even in this odd pose by combination of pale scapular line, messy sides of breast, with dark chevrons extending along fore flanks, and dark ventral streaking



181. Adult Sharp-tailed Sandpiper *Calidris acuminata*, Scilly, September 1974 (*D. B. Hunt*). Identifiable as *acuminata* or Pectoral Sandpiper *C. melanotos* by characteristic bill shape, small head on short neck, prominent supercilium and pale scapular line; seems to show ventral streaking, but safe identification barely possible on this view



in late September. The wings and tail are moulted in winter, or early spring, and the body feathers are moulted again between February and June.

Juveniles moult into first-winter plumage between October and January. They then closely resemble winter adults, but are separable by chestnut, or bright buff, edges to some wing-coverts. The juvenile Sharp-tailed at Shotton, Clwyd, in 1973 showed no sign of moult on 20th October, but the individual at Hamilton, Strathclyde, was in first-winter plumage on 18th October 1956 (Meiklejohn *et al.* 1959).

Thus, individuals seen between August and October can be summer adults, juveniles or birds in winter plumage. These three plumages are basically similar for Pectoral, but each is different for Sharp-tailed, particularly on the underparts. In autumn, both species can also be in transitional plumage.

Field characters

General jizz

Both species vary in size between slightly larger and considerably larger than Dunlin *C. alpina*, a species which is itself very variable in size. Each has a flattish back, pot belly, short legs, rather long rear-end, and smallish head on a neck which, although normally appearing short, can become surprisingly long when the bird is alert. There were no significant differences in jizz between the Seal Sands adult and a Pectoral watched the same day on Coatham Marsh, Cleveland. The St Mary's adult, apart from being a little larger in size and broader about the head, was similar in jizz to the accompanying Pectorals. The adult at Cowpen Marsh, Cleveland, in 1963 was 'slightly bigger and if anything more portly' than Pectoral (Stead 1965). According to Johnson *et al.* (1974), the Shotton juvenile Sharp-tailed was 'much less upright in posture and stockier in appearance with shorter neck and legs', but, to my eyes, although very stocky, it was no stockier than some Pectorals, and measurements show that Sharp-tailed actually has

182. Adult male Pectoral Sandpiper *Calidris melanotos*, Chukotski Peninsula, USSR, July 1970 (A. Kistchinski). Throat- and supercilium-streaking already very reduced, but extensive arrowheads remain on lower part of well-defined breast band





183. Adult Sharp-tailed Sandpiper *Calidris acuminata*, Gulf of Amour, USSR, May 1969 (M. Omelko). Classic spring adult with considerable pot belly



184. Adult Sharp-tailed Sandpiper *Calidris acuminata*, Gulf of Amour, USSR, September (year not known) (T. Shibnev). In heavy moult, but a dozen or so chevrons remain on sides of breast slightly longer legs. Sharp-tailed often has a flatter, less rounded crown than Pectoral (cf. *Brit. Birds* 67: plates 50 & 51 and 68: plates 44a & 44b).

While differences in jizz are not diagnostic, the tendency of Sharp-tailed to appear larger, more portly, shorter-necked and flatter-crowned does provide useful supporting characters. The sharp tail (Witherby *et al.* 1940) is of no value in the field.

Head and crown

Both species have a conspicuous pale supercilium, contrasting with dark crown, brownish ear-coverts and lores, and paler lower cheeks. The off-white to pale grey supercilium of Pectoral is generally broader in front of the eye, but rather thinner and tapering behind, sometimes finely streaked darker. The crown is chestnut-brown, streaked darker, but, in autumn, adults are duller and may lack chestnut. The supercilium normally con-



185. Three winter-plumaged Sharp-tailed Sandpipers *Calidris acuminata* (left) with one juvenile moulting into first-winter plumage, but retaining necklace and head-pattern (right), and one Curlew Sandpiper *C. ferruginea* (preening), Australia, winter 1972/73 (Peder Weibull)

trasts quite strongly with the crown, but may be inconspicuous on adults. The throat is streaked on summer adults, but off-white, sometimes faintly streaked, on individuals in other plumages.

The supercilium of adult Sharp-tailed is rather broader and whiter than that of Pectoral and contrasts more with the crown. It is broader behind the eye than in front and can be faintly streaked darker. The crown is rufous-brown or chestnut-brown, streaked black-brown, and is generally a little brighter than that of juvenile Pectoral. The throat is heavily streaked in summer, but white in winter. Although the crown of juvenile Pectoral can be as chestnut as that of an adult Sharp-tailed, especially in bright sunlight, the latter's crown is outstandingly bright compared with the rest of its upperparts, whereas Pectoral has fringes to tertials, scapulars and outer mantle feathers which are brighter and rustier than the crown.

Juvenile Sharp-tailed has a striking face pattern, with an even broader, cleaner and whiter supercilium, markedly contrasting with the crown, which is dark chocolate-brown or chestnut-brown, streaked pale rufous. This conspicuous cap sits rather forward on the head and ends abruptly at the rear. The face pattern is completed by the prominent white throat and fore-cheeks which almost merge with the supercilium in front of the eye.

Other upperparts

Juvenile Pectoral has dark blackish-brown upperparts, with a conspicuous white mantle line and a rather broader, but less pure white, scapular (lower) line. Many feather edges are bright chestnut or rusty, particularly the tertials and outer mantle (between the mantle and scapular lines). Adults in autumn, from as early as July, are much duller, with obscured mantle and scapular lines and the chestnut feather edgings dulled by wear, but the scapular and especially the tertial edgings are still rustier than the crown.

The upperparts of adult Sharp-tailed in autumn are decidedly grey-brown, in striking contrast to the rufous-brown crown. The feather edges are brown and whitish and there is no rust or chestnut except that some individuals have rusty-buff inner edges to the tertials. White scapular and mantle lines can be vague or distinct, but the scapular line is usually the most distinct.

Juvenile Sharp-tailed has very dark upperparts, with large blackish mantle and scapular feathers, finely edged bright buff. The tertials and some wing-coverts are also edged pale rufous to buff, but do not approach

the rust of juvenile Pectoral. There is a thin white mantle line and a broken, less white scapular line, but both may be obscure. Although the crown is brighter than the rest of the upperparts, the contrast is less marked than on adults.

The number and intensity of pale Vs on the back is not a useful character, but the relative brightness of crown and back is diagnostic of adult Sharp-tailed and is at least helpful in separating juveniles.

Underparts

Summer adult, winter adult and juvenile Sharp-tailed each have very different underparts and all are distinct from those of Pectoral. Precise observation of the underparts of a suspected Sharp-tailed should always ensure correct identification.

In all plumages, Pectoral has dark blackish-brown streaks, on a warm buff background, across the entire width of the breast, forming a uniform gorget which contrasts sharply at the lower edge with the white belly. This 'pectoral band' has a slight downward point in the centre and is conspicuous, even in flight. Its general colour varies, some individuals having quite grey-brown breasts in dull light which are transformed by bright sunlight to a rich brown. The remaining underparts are white, although usually one or two streaks extend below the gorget at the extreme sides of the breast. Most individuals have a few vague dark streaks on the flanks, but these are often concealed by the closed wings and are apparent only at close range. The markings of the centre and lower part of the gorget consist of fine mottles and arrowheads on summer adult males.

The breast of summer adult Sharp-tailed is covered across its entire width with dark brown or ochraceous-brown scallops, crescents and chevrons, with streaking and spots restricted to the upper breast. These markings merge into white lower underparts and, at the sides of the breast, become ventral-pointing chevrons, which extend in two or three rows right along the white flanks. They are aptly described as 'boomerang shaped' in the Australian field guide (Slater 1970). The undertail-coverts are white, with extensive, and prominent, thin, dark brown streaks.

186. Four winter-plumaged Sharp-tailed Sandpipers *Calidris acuminata*, Australia, winter 1972/73 (Peder Weibull)



Winter adult Sharp-tailed lacks the breast markings and flank chevrons, but may retain some dark brown streaks on the undertail-coverts. It has a very pale grey to greyish-buff breast, merging into white belly, with thin dark streaks mainly restricted to the sides of breast, extending down in front of the carpal joint, but has a very few dark spots or streaks in the centre of the breast.

Juvenile Sharp-tailed has a rich orange-buff breast, recalling a bright juvenile Ruff, which is unique among *Calidris* waders. This colour, which was well illustrated in Witherby *et al.* (1940), shades into the white lower breast and belly and extends farther down at the sides by the carpal joint. In profile, the white belly shows extensively. A narrow collar of very fine, dark brown streaks encircles the lower throat, and there is a small area of thicker dark brown streaks within the orange-buff by the carpal joint. The flanks and undertail-coverts are unmarked white.

Both species may rarely have a faint buff wash on the flanks.

Bare parts

Sharp-tailed has a slightly shorter and straighter bill than Pectoral: a field impression which is supported by measurements. The bill is blackish, with only a trace of flesh or yellow-brown at the base of the lower mandible, whereas Pectoral's similarly coloured bill has a much larger pale basal area.

Pectoral has rather 'dirty' yellow-ochre legs, often tinged green, occasionally tinged brown. Sharp-tailed has pale greenish-grey or dull olive-green legs, which tend to be tinged yellow on juveniles. Witherby *et al.* (1940) accurately portrayed the typical leg colour of both species and support the field impression of a yellow tinge on juvenile Sharp-tailed which is not present on adults.

A Sharp-tailed at Zuidelijk Flevoland, Netherlands, from 1st to 26th November 1969 was in poor condition and atypically had flesh-coloured legs (Oreel 1974). Although such aberrant individuals underline the need for caution, leg colour is nevertheless a useful supporting field character.

Measurements

Prater *et al.* (1977) gave bill-, tarsus- and wing-lengths for both species, with data separated into the four age/sex combinations. These data are summarised in table 2. Within each species, there are no significant differences between adults and juveniles, but males average 6-10% larger

Table 2. Comparative measurements (in mm) of Sharp-tailed Sandpiper *Calidris acuminata* and Pectoral Sandpiper *C. melanotos*

The ranges and, in brackets, averages are derived from Prater *et al.* (1977)

		Sharp-tailed	Pectoral
Wing	♂	133-145 (140.0)	136-150 (143.6)
Wing	♀	124-137 (130.7)	124-136 (130.3)
Bill	♂	23- 28 (25.5)	26- 32 (28.9)
Bill	♀	22- 26 (24.0)	24- 30 (27.4)
Tarsus	♂	29- 32 (30.4)	26- 31 (28.6)
Tarsus	♀	26- 31 (28.4)	25- 28 (26.8)

than females in all measurements. On average, Sharp-tailed has a similar wing-length to Pectoral, slightly longer legs and a shorter bill, but all measurements show considerable overlap between the two species.

Call

Pectoral's usual note on passage is a reedy or hoarse 'kriiek', 'kreeek', 'tchree-eep', 'tirrp-tirrp' or 'trrit-trrit' often repeated and recalling—but distinct from—a Curlew Sandpiper *C. ferruginea*. Sharp-tailed's calls are distinctly different, being less reedy and less harsh: 'plee', 'pleep', 'trrt',



187. First-winter Pectoral Sandpiper *Calidris melanotos*, Kent, September 1978 (R. J. Chandler). Note good scapular lines and less distinct mantle lines, strong supercilium, broad wing-covert edgings and generally bright appearance compared with adult (plate 188)

188. Summer adult female Pectoral Sandpiper *Calidris melanotos*, Kent, September 1979 (R. J. Chandler). Note heavily streaked throat and sides of neck, coarsely marked upperparts, absence of scapular line and inconspicuous pale mantle line, streaked and rather vague supercilium. Breast markings lacking arrowheads suggests female, confirmed by this individual being the smaller of two seen together



‘prip’, ‘riup’, ‘whit’, ‘weep’, ‘weet’ or ‘cheeip’, variously described as soft, metallic, dry or musical. Combinations such as ‘prtt-wheet-wheet’ or ‘teet-teet-trrt-trrt’ recall a Swallow *Hirundo rustica*. Both species call mainly in flight and can be very vocal, or frustratingly silent.

Table 3. Summary of differences in autumn between Sharp-tailed Sandpiper *Calidris acuminata* and Pectoral Sandpiper *C. melanotos*

	Sharp-tailed	Pectoral
Jizz	Basically similar, but tends to be slightly larger, more portly, shorter necked and flatter crowned	
Supercilium	Broader and whiter than Pectoral’s, broader behind eye than in front; most pronounced on juveniles	Generally broader in front of eye, tapering behind; conspicuous, but may be obscure on adults
Crown	Adult: outstandingly chestnut compared with back. Juvenile: conspicuous chestnut-brown cap sits rather forward on head. A little brighter than back	Can be bright rusty, but less rusty than outer mantle and tertials
Face pattern	Juveniles: striking; extensive white throat and forecheeks almost merge with supercilium in front of eye	
Rest of upperparts	Variable white mantle and scapular lines. Juvenile: bright buff or pale rufous edges to outer mantle, scapulars, tertials and some wing-coverts are rather less bright than crown. Adult: decidedly grey-brown, in striking contrast to crown	Juvenile: rusty edges to tertials and outer mantle brighter than crown; prominent white scapular and mantle lines. Adult: duller, with obscured scapular and mantle lines
Breast and belly	Summer adult: breast heavily marked with brown scallops, crescents and chevrons, merging into white belly. Juvenile: breast rich orange-buff (unique among <i>Calidris</i> waders), merging into extensive white belly. Narrow collar of fine dark brown streaks encircles lower throat. Thicker streaks by carpal joint. Winter: breast very pale grey to greyish-buff, merging into white lower underparts. Thin dark streaks by carpal joint	Heavily streaked blackish-brown on warm buff background; ends abruptly at lower edge, contrasting strongly with white lower underparts. ‘Pectoral band’ conspicuous even in flight
Flanks	Summer adult: two or three rows of dark brown ventrally pointing chevrons. Winter/juvenile: unmarked white	Unmarked white. At close range, most show a few vague dark streaks
Undertail-coverts	Summer adult: extensive and prominent thin dark brown streaks. Winter adult: white, but may retain some streaks. Juvenile: unmarked white	Unmarked white
Bill	Straighter and slightly shorter. Blackish; trace of flesh or yellow-brown at base	Slightly longer. Blackish, more extensive pale at base
Legs	Dull olive-green or pale greenish-grey. Yellowish tinge on juveniles	‘Dirty’ yellow-ochre, often tinged green, occasionally tinged brown
Call	Soft dry ‘pleep’, ‘cheep’, ‘trrt’, etc., recalls Swallow <i>Hirundo rustica</i>	Reedy harsh ‘kriick’, ‘tirrp-tirrp’, etc., recalls Curlew Sandpiper <i>C. ferruginea</i>

Other features

Other features of Sharp-tailed shared by both species, which are therefore not useful for separation, are mentioned here for completeness. The flight is generally sluggish, occasionally swift, with measured wing-beats recalling a female Ruff and making the bird appear larger in the air than on the ground. In flight, it shows very dark centre to the uppertail, with a conspicuous whitish oval area at each side of base, again recalling a Ruff, and a pale bar along the inner wing. Dark streaks on the sides of neck tend to form lines, especially on summer adults. Both species are usually very approachable.

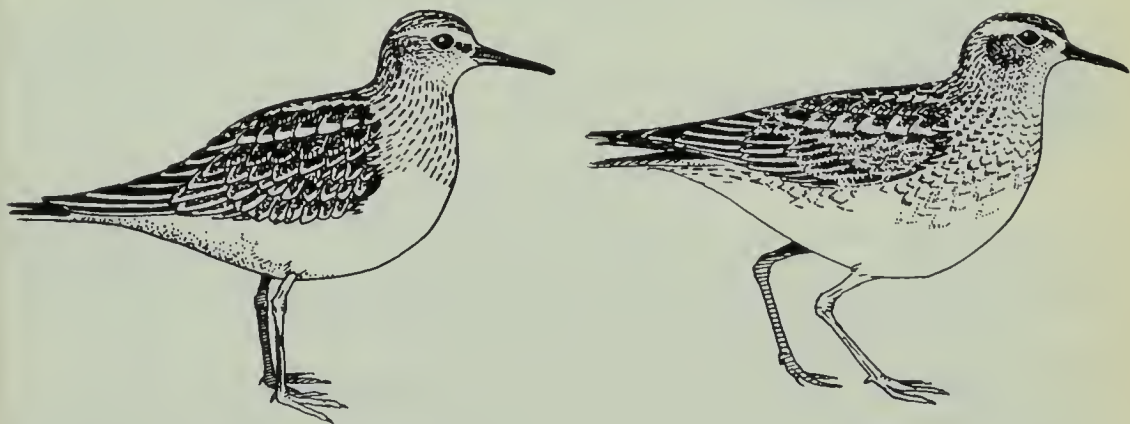


Fig. 2. Juvenile Pectoral Sandpiper *Calidris melanotos*. Note (1) conspicuous supercilium (which may be obscure on adults), generally broader in front of eye, tapering behind; (2) bill slightly longer than that of Sharp-tailed *C. acuminata*; (3) pale area at base of bill more extensive than on Sharp-tailed; (4) pectoral band; (5) flanks and undertail-coverts unstreaked white; and (6) prominent white scapular and mantle lines (*Bryan Bland*)

Fig. 3. Adult Sharp-tailed Sandpiper *Calidris acuminata*. Note (1) supercilium broader and whiter than that of Pectoral Sandpiper *C. melanotos*, broader behind eye than in front; (2) outstandingly chestnut crown; (3) bill straighter and slightly shorter than that of Pectoral; (4) breast heavily marked with brown scallops, crescents and chevrons, merging into white belly; (5) flanks showing two or three rows of ventrally pointing chevrons; (6) undertail-coverts extensively streaked; (7) upperparts grey, in contrast to crown and (8) scapular line usually more distinct than mantle line (*Bryan Bland*)

Spring adults

Pectorals are now regular in Britain in spring, but Sharp-tailed has yet to be recorded in spring plumage. The individual in Dorset on 2nd April 1978 was still in winter plumage: the nuptial plumage of a spring adult being acquired in May or June. Generally, the differences between summer adults (in autumn) of the two species also apply to spring adults, the underparts providing the most useful characters. Spring adult Sharp-tailed differs from autumn adult in having rufous edges to some mantle feathers, scapulars, tertials and wing-coverts, more evident dark streaks in the supercilium, an even brighter chestnut crown and a chestnut-buff wash on the upper breast. Although the crown is still more chestnut than the rest of the upperparts, the contrast is less marked.

Spring adult Pectorals have bright upperparts—like juveniles—but otherwise generally resemble autumn adults. In both species, first-summer birds are inseparable from adults.

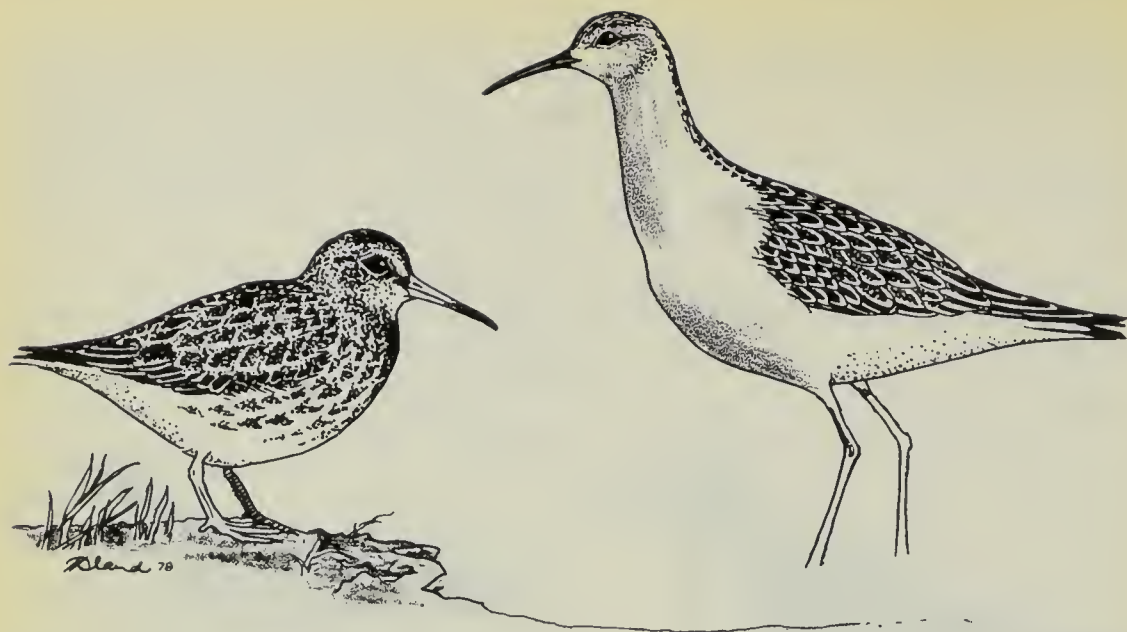


Fig. 4. Surprisingly, both Purple Sandpiper *Calidris maritima* (left) and Ruff *Philomachus pugnax* have been identified as Sharp-tailed Sandpiper *C. acuminata*. Note brown blotchy streaks on breast and flanks, poor supercilium, and bill : leg ratio of Purple Sandpiper; and longer legs, rounder head, longer neck and absence of white belly on Ruff (Bryan Bland)

Other confusion species: Ruff and Purple Sandpiper

The superficial resemblance between a small (female) juvenile Ruff and a juvenile Sharp-tailed is strong. A female Ruff is only a little larger, has a buff breast, bright upperparts, which can show one distinct bright V, a weak wing-bar and white lateral uppertail-coverts. The flight is similar, and the bill, although a little longer, is of similar shape. Ruff, however, is slimmer, has longer legs (usually of the wrong colour), a much longer neck and a rounder head. Although sometimes exhibiting a fairly distinct supercilium, it lacks the striking face pattern of juvenile Sharp-tailed. The buff breast can be quite orange, but this suffuses back close to the legs, so that, in profile, Ruff lacks the extensive white belly of Sharp-tailed.

It is less easy to see how a Purple Sandpiper can be identified as a Sharp-tailed, but this has occasionally happened. The outstanding instance was a juvenile at Benacre Broad, Suffolk, in August 1977, which, although seen by many observers and widely regarded at the time as a Sharp-tailed, was undoubtedly a Purple (G. J. Jobson, D. J. Holman, A. J. Prater *in litt.*). Most Purple Sandpipers seen in Britain are in the slate-grey winter plumage, feed on wave-splashed rocks and look nothing like Sharp-tailed. A juvenile or summer adult, however, with short legs, short neck, round belly, 'dirty' yellowish legs and chestnut on crown and foremantle is another matter, especially when seen in atypical habitat. The main distinctions are the very poorly marked, or absent, supercilium and the underparts which, with brown blotchy streaks on the breast and flanks, are quite different from all plumages of Sharp-tailed. Also, Purple's bill is considerably longer than its tarsus, whereas Sharp-tailed's is clearly shorter (Prater *et al.* 1977).

AJP has pointed out that the very unworn edges to the mantle and coverts, and the down in places on the head, clearly made the Suffolk bird a

juvenile; yet thoughts which made it seem like a Sharp-tailed had to assume that it was an adult. If the importance of ageing any rare wader had been appreciated, the original misidentification could not have occurred.

Acknowledgments

Grateful thanks are due to the many people involved in the preparation of this paper, especially to Bryan Bland, P. A. Dukes and D. S. Flumm for reviewing an early draft; J. G. Goldsmith for providing facilities at the Castle Museum, Norwich; M. J. Rogers and the *British Birds* Rarities Committee for making descriptions available; P. J. Grant for his constant encouragement; and Dr Irene Neufeldt for her help in obtaining photographs. Valuable assistance was also given by R. H. Dennis, I. J. Ferguson-Lees, D. J. Holman, G. J. Jobson, B. A. E. Marr, B. Nightingale, A. J. Prater, M. J. Seago, B. Walker and N. Williams.

Summary

The 15 accepted British and Irish records of Sharp-tailed Sandpiper *Calidris acuminata* are listed in table 1. The main identification features separating Sharp-tailed from Pectoral Sandpiper *C. melanotos* are summarised in table 3. The only other likely confusion species are Ruff *Philomachus pugnax* and Purple Sandpiper *C. maritima*.

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Obituary

Maurice Derrick England, OBE, FChS (1908-1980)

Derrick the enthusiast: that is how many of us will remember Derrick England who died on 24th February. He was one of that band of gifted and dedicated amateurs who have given so much to British ornithology.

Though by profession a chiropodist, he became an outstanding aviculturist, photographer, and recorder of bird behaviour. He was a leading and much respected member of his own profession, and freely gave a great deal of his time and expertise to the Society of Chiropodists.



189. Derrick England (1908-1980)

After his training at the London Foot Hospital, the greater part of his professional life was in private practice in Surrey. He also held a part-time appointment as Senior Lecturer at the London Foot Hospital, and for a time acted as Principal during an interregnum. He served on the council of the Society of Chiropodists, chaired several of its committees, was for many years its vice-president, and was made an honorary vice-president in 1970. In 1969, he was made an OBE.

He had a natural talent for teaching, and generations of students profited from his ability to communicate in a simple and direct way, both in speech and in print. This ability was utilised by admirers in other fields, for Derrick England was a man of varied interests, all of which he pursued with unflagging energy and enthusiasm. He was much in demand by aviculturists, ornithologists and photographers, as a speaker and writer. In these fields, he played a leading part, providing much new information through his meticulous observations.

As a photographer he was outstanding, his main areas of interest being birds and, perhaps surprisingly to readers of this journal, railway engines. There can be no dispute that his name ranks among those of the very best of photographers. We can see why in those superb results which he allowed to be published, most of which are studies in bird behaviour rather than mere portraits. His great distinction was his high selectivity, concentrating his time and energy in the pursuit of a particular species. To find rare or difficult species, he travelled extensively, often leading expeditions, and spending months in preparation. His determination paid high dividends: his photographs of the Black-shouldered Kite *Elanus caeruleus* (*Brit. Birds* 56: 444-452) and the Crane *Grus grus* (*Brit. Birds* 56: 375-377) have not been surpassed; the Rufous Bush Robin *Cercotrichas galactotes* and the Rock Bunting *Emberiza cia* at nests (in Campbell 1974, *The Dictionary of Birds*) are unique in their clarity and setting; the Red-rumped Swallow *Hirundo daurica* carrying lining material to its mud nest (in Landsborough Thomson 1964, *A New Dictionary of Birds*) is an excellent example of the best of his behaviour photographs. He and his photographic work were featured some years ago in the series 'British bird-photographers' (*Brit. Birds* 62: 66-69, plates 9-16).

He was a respected aviculturist, responsible for breeding and hand-rearing many 'difficult' species, especially hornbills, barbets and other softbills. Though devoted to aviculture, he was among the first to point out the urgent need for controls in imports. From 1971 onwards, he was avicultural adviser to the Rarities Committee, and in 1974 published an important paper (*Brit. Birds* 67: 177-197) on the problems created for field ornithologists by escaped cage-birds. He wrote many notes and papers on ornithological and avicultural subjects, and his photographs appeared in books throughout the world. He was photographic editor of *British Birds* from July 1976 until ill-health forced him to resign 11½ months later. In that short time, the journal benefited greatly from his worldwide contacts and his determination to seek perfection in the quality of prints and published photographic plates.

Modest and almost self-effacing, he stayed determinedly independent, setting himself the high standards he expected to find in others. Though often critical of needless bureaucracy and inefficiency, he remained always polite and good humoured.

His wife Joan shared his interests and enthusiasms, providing him with inspiration and devotion when most needed; to her goes our sincerest sympathy. Derrick will be sadly missed, but he will be remembered, for he leaves behind so many tangible mementos of his talents. P. J. S. OLNEY

Fifty years ago . . .

'The Rev. F. C. Butters has sent us a detailed account of a Buff-backed Heron which has been observed in south Devonshire since 16th June 1930. Mr. Butters has watched the bird most carefully and has given very good evidence to prove its identification, which has been confirmed by Mr. W. Walmesley White and others. Mr. Butters described the bird as wary and not as behaving like an escapee from captivity. This, however, it would seem certainly to be, since Mr Alfred Ezra states that he liberated five at Foxwarren Park, Cobham, Surrey, in April, and has lost two of them.' (*Brit. Birds* 24: 85, August 1930)

Mystery photographs

44 The dagger-like bill, long pointed wings, tapered tail and extensive black wing-tips on this otherwise white bird superficially suggest a Gannet *Sula bassana*, but a second glance reveals the clean black cap: last month's mystery photograph (plate 171, repeated here at reduced size) is clearly an adult tern, though that first glance provided all the clues for a correct identification.

Sandwich Tern *Sterna sandvicensis* is perhaps the most Gannet-like of the terns in shape, but is slimmer than our bird, has a shorter, less powerful head and neck, a much finer bill and dark on the underwing confined to the tips of the outer primaries. Is it a Gull-billed Tern *Gelochelidon nilotica*? That species has a dark tip to the underwing, but much less extensive than is shown here (see *Brit. Birds* 66: plate 55 and 71: 466-468). Also, Gull-billed has broader, less pointed and less rigid wings (it is the most gull-like of the terns), a short neck and a stubby bill.

Caspian Tern *S. caspia* and Royal Tern *S. maxima* superficially resemble Gannet in shape, and the long neck and head are characteristic of both species. The completely blackish underside of the outer primaries, however, leaves no doubt that it is a Caspian. The photograph was taken by Alan Kitson in Mongolia in August 1979. Royal's underwing is white, with grey tips on the outer primaries, forming a dark trailing edge to the outer underwing. Interestingly, this difference is reversed on the upperwing, adult Royal having obviously blackish outer primaries, contrasting sharply with the pale grey remainder, and always darker and more contrasting than on Caspian. Royal has rather more angled wings, more flexible and deeper wing beats and is less massive about the neck, head and bill. Also, the



190. Mystery photograph 45. Identify the species. Answer next month

complete black cap is present for only a few weeks during the early breeding season.

One diagnostic feature not shown here is the bill colour, which is bright rich red on Caspian (slightly paler on juveniles than on adults), but orange on adult Royal and ochraceous-yellow on juveniles. Much confusion has been caused by Royal's bill colour being incorrectly depicted as red (e.g. in Hollom, 1960, *The Popular Handbook of Rarer British Birds*); the colour is accurately illustrated in Robbins *et al.* (1966, *Birds of North America*) and Heinzel *et al.* (1972, *The Birds of Britain and Europe with North Africa and the Middle East*).

DAVID BRITTON

Notes

Great Crested Grebes breeding on rivers Recent notes by R. E. Youngman (*Brit. Birds* 70: 544-545) and H. J. Harvey (*Brit. Birds* 72: 385-386) and the letter by D. H. Gantzel (*Brit. Birds* 71: 226-227) have documented the history of Great Crested Grebes *Podiceps cristatus* breeding on rivers. Recently, we analysed the habitats used by this species at the time of the 1975 national census: Great Crested Grebes were reported from 15 rivers. (Since collecting breeding data was incidental to the main purpose of the census and in some areas observations were limited to a single weekend, the figures are a minimal assessment of the true status on rivers.) In Norfolk, 88 individuals were found in Broadland, at least six pairs breeding; in the East Anglian Fenlands, 68 grebes were reported, with nine or more breeding pairs; in other areas, a total of 49 individuals on four rivers included at least 13 breeding pairs. Although the largest numbers were in Norfolk, on the Yare (45) and the Bure (34), constant movement between these rivers and the Broads means that only a few grebes would have had breeding territories on true river habitat; nevertheless, despite the high density of pleasure craft and considerable tidal fluctuations in water level, breeding is occasionally attempted on the main channels on these rivers.

While Mr Youngman's figures show a rapid increase from 1975 to 1976, Mr Harvey's note demonstrates that in many areas the habit of breeding on rivers is comparatively recent. In 1975, Great Crested Grebes were found on relatively few rivers during the breeding season; although increasing, numbers are small and in 1975 represented less than 3% of the total English population.

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Black-headed Gulls stealing from feeding Oystercatchers In November 1977, on the outskirts of Cork, I watched, from my car, a flock of about 70 Oystercatchers *Haematopus ostralegus* feeding in a large, partially flooded field at the side of the road. About 20 Black-headed Gulls *Larus ridibundus*



191-194. Sequence of four photographs showing Black-headed Gull *Larus ridibundus* following feeding Oystercatchers *Haematopus ostralegus*, stealing their catch of worms, and flying off, Cork. November 1977 (Richard T. Mills)



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195-197. Sequence of three photographs showing Black-headed Gull *Larus ridibundus* snatching worm away from feeding Oystercatcher *Haematopus ostralegus* and making off with it.
Cork, November 1977 (Richard T. Mills)



were following those Oystercatchers feeding around the shallow flooded depression about 15m from me. Each gull would move about, apparently keeping an eye on the four or five waders nearest to it. As soon as one of the latter caught a worm (which seemed to be fairly plentiful), the gull would immediately chase it and force it to give up its prey (plates 191-197). At other times, when the Oystercatcher appeared about to find something, the gull would hover above it. Occasionally, several Oystercatchers would make a run together at a more obstinate gull, but this did not deter it for very long. It was obviously profitable for the gulls, for they did not bother looking for food themselves, being content merely to harry the Oystercatchers.

RICHARD T. MILLS

Redwing, 44 Halldone Avenue, Bishopstown, Cork, Ireland

Division of labour between Dippers building nest On 31st March 1978, at Hardcastle Craggs, Hebden Bridge, North Yorkshire, I found the nest of a pair of Dippers *Cinclus cinclus* under an overhang about 3m above a swiftly-flowing stream; it was about 70% completed. For over an hour, in very good light, I watched the two birds building. During this time, ten bundles of grass were collected from the edge of the stream and incorporated into the nest; and five beech *Fagus sylvatica* leaves were retrieved from the stream, making a total of 15 deliveries to the nest. This fits the nest-building description given by Bruce Campbell and James Ferguson-Lees (1974, *A Field Guide to Birds' Nests*); on this occasion, however, one Dipper did all the collecting and flew to a flat stone in the centre of the stream, while the other flew down to join its mate where the material was passed from the first's bill to the second's. The builder then returned to the nest and the collector continued searching for new material. Later in the day, farther along the same stream, I watched another nest under construction (almost completed): both Dippers shared collecting and building, adding eight bundles of material in 42 minutes.

RON FREETHY

15 Lower Manor Lane, Burnley, Lancashire BB12 0EB

High concentrations of feeding Dunnocks It would be interesting to know the identity of the weeds referred to by R. E. Youngman in his note on Dunnocks *Prunella modularis* feeding gregariously (*Brit. Birds* 71: 182). Over the last eight years, during which I have observed such gatherings annually, the attraction has invariably been one plant: fat-hen *Chenopodium album*, especially when it forms extensive patches of complete ground cover. During the winter of 1977/78, in such a site, where what I have come to call 'Dunnock-weed' evenly overtopped a crop of turnips about 0.2ha in area, at least 60 Dunnocks came daily to feed on the seed; from early November until the field was ploughed in January, I caught 50 individuals, including 15 which I had already ringed locally from 1974 onwards. The attractiveness of fat-hen to Dunnocks, however, extends over a long period, for such gatherings can be observed well before the seed has formed. Thus, in July and August 1975, I repeatedly flushed concentrations of up to 30 from a dense patch of fat-hen less than 100m² in extent, and I am convinced

that at this season the black aphids *Aphis* for which this plant is a host were being sought, for I regularly catch Dunnocks in chardonneret traps baited with these insects. I should stress that on no occasion have I seen such gatherings of Dunnocks behaving as a coherent or co-ordinated flock, either when feeding or in flight.

W. D. CAMPBELL

Ticknell Corner, The Slade, Charlbury, Oxford

On 25th December 1967, near Driffield, North Humberside, I found a closely packed flock of about 100 Dunnocks in a ride in a small conifer plantation surrounded by arable farmland. On this farm, quantities of seed are put out during the winter as feed for gamebirds, and I suspect that the Dunnocks had discovered one of these regular artificial feeding-sites.

V. A. DRAKE

Division of Entomology, CSIRO, PO Box 1700, Canberra, ACT 2601, Australia

We have also received observations from J. Corfield, who recorded a small party of almost ten Dunnocks feeding closely together on a ploughed field just north of Stevenage, Hertfordshire, on 6th April 1978; and from R. A. Frost, who counted 28 Dunnocks feeding together among straw and dead leaves at Scarecliffe Park, Derbyshire, on 25th December 1975, and added that he has often seen winter parties of up to about ten at feeding stations for Pheasants *Phasianus colchicus*. EDS

Aberrant song of Dunnock During the breeding season of 1978 and again during March 1979, I heard and recorded an aberrant song of a paired Dunnock *Prunella modularis* in the Hertfordshire and Middlesex Trust for Nature Conservation's reserve 'Fir and Pond Woods' near Potters Bar, Hertfordshire. I interpreted this unusual song as 'treedle-treedle-treedle-tree' (with up to ten 'treedles' per phrase), each phrase lasting about between one and three seconds and being uttered at the rate of approximately one every four seconds, with the first few notes of the normal song starting it off. Indeed, it seemed to be an extension of these commencing notes. The same individual also had a normal song, but this was never intermixed—in any one song burst—with the variant.

A third song-type—probably not an unusual variation—was also uttered, being almost normal but with a somewhat prolonged ending.

PAUL DRIVER

45 Tiverton Road, Potters Bar, Hertfordshire EN6 5HY

Mr Driver's tape has been examined by Ron Kettle, curator of the British Library of Wildlife Sounds, and Dr D. W. Snow, who is currently undertaking a study of the Dunnock. Mr Kettle could find no comparable reference in the literature nor any similar sound on any recording. He had, however, heard what he considers to have been the same sound himself, in company with John Gordon, at Woodchester Park, Gloucestershire, on 9th April 1978. He transcribed it as: 'treedle te wee-er wee-er wee-er . . .'. Dr Snow commented that both the song and the subsong recorded by Mr Driver were unusual, particularly the very short, unusually jerky—rather than rambling—song phrases. EDS.

Redstarts wintering in Avon, South Glamorgan and Dorset On a number of occasions between early November and 28th December 1969, at Clevedon, Avon, I saw a Redstart *Phoenicurus phoenicurus* in or near our garden on Strawberry Hill, 200-300 m from a deciduous wood. It appeared

at times to be seeking food, perhaps spiders, round the walls of the house. When first sighted it was in juvenile plumage, but subsequently moulted into male winter plumage. It could fly well, but seemed to have a bunch of misplaced secondaries in one wing, noticeable when it perched; perhaps it had recovered from an accident or other infirmity which had prevented or inhibited it from migrating at the correct time. It was seen into January 1970 by a neighbour. This appears to be the first record of a Redstart wintering in Britain.

K. E. L. SIMMONS

Department of Psychology, The University, Leicester LE1 7RH

On 30th October and 1st November 1976, at Lisvane Reservoir, South Glamorgan, a female Redstart *Phoenicurus phoenicurus* was seen by several observers, including Maurice Chown and DJF. It was particularly pale with noticeable pale buff edges to the secondaries and inner primaries. On 11th December, what was probably the same individual was seen by MC in a garden on a housing estate about 2 km to the south.

From at least 3rd until 20th December 1976, an immature male Redstart was present on the Nothe, Weymouth, Dorset. DJF and ISR noted that it fed on the numerous flies (Diptera) among the seaweed along an area of rocky foreshore and a seawall. Quite often it gave a quiet 'tick' call, unlike the wintering Black Redstarts *P. ochruros* which always remained silent. On the several occasions when the two species came into conflict, the Redstart always succeeded in chasing off the Black Redstart.

While the earlier dates are not unusually late for Redstarts, R. Hudson (1973, *Early and Late Dates for Summer Migrants*) gave only three December records for the species.

D. J. FISHER and I. S. ROBERTSON

9 Hurford Place, Cyncoed, Cardiff CF26QZ

The January report mentioned by Dr Simmons was the first ever for that month. In future, we shall be publishing out-of-season records only in exceptional circumstances, but reports will be passed to Robert Hudson for possible inclusion in any revision of his 1973 listings. Eds

Robin-like feeding by Stonechat Mrs Sheila Bottomley's note on a Stonechat *Saxicola torquata* feeding like a Robin *Erithacus rubecula* (*Brit. Birds* 71: 84) prompts me to record the following. On 31st January 1976, in my garden in Southampton, I was returfing a patch of lawn when a nearby movement immediately made me think the resident Robin was in the vicinity. I glanced in the direction of the movement and was surprised to see a female Stonechat. She stayed close, sometimes less than 1 m away and occasionally picking unidentifiable items off the stacked turves and using the various garden tools as perches while I finished the turling. I later started collecting dead leaves and other items for burning, including old stems of New England aster *Aster novae-angliae*, the seeds of which the Stonechat appeared to take. I examined some seeds with a 20 × lens, but found no minute organisms. While the Stonechat was in my garden, the only readily identifiable items I saw it take were earthworms (Lumbricidae). I can find no mention of Stonechats taking seeds.

TERRY M. MARTIN

144 Athelstan Road, Bitterne, Southampton

We are grateful to K. G. Spencer for bringing to our attention the following from the *Lancashire Bird Report 1971*: 'A very tame [female Stonechat], at Wigan, 4 & 5 December, followed a gardening crew, perching on tools and truck as would a Robin.' A letter on Robin-like feeding by Stonechat also appears on page 366, and we feel that the behaviour has now been adequately covered; we shall not, therefore, be publishing further notes on the subject. EDS

Blackbird 'playing' with leaf On 6th October 1977, at Blunham, Bedfordshire, my father, my wife and I watched an adult male Blackbird *Turdus merula* repeatedly picking up and tossing away a fallen leaf of Norway maple *Acer platanoides*. The actions were similar to those used by any feeding Blackbird in autumn, but were repeated at least 14 times with the same leaf, the bird flying or running after the leaf on each occasion. No attempt was made to peck underneath the moved leaf; the actions resembled a game, and recalled a kitten playing. The leaf measured 11 × 14 cm.

J. T. R. SHARROCK

Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3NJ

Blackbird feeding on tideline The letter from Bernard King (*Brit. Birds* 71: 311) on passerines feeding on tidelines recalled a male Blackbird *Turdus merula* which I observed on the Gann Estuary, Dyfed, on 21st June 1978. It approached a small heap of seaweed and hopped into the centre, then hopped up and down several times until it had disturbed a considerable number of sandhoppers (Amphipoda), which could easily be seen jumping into the air around it. It then collected a beakful, usually by picking them off the ground, but on several occasions catching them in the air. When it had filled its beak, the Blackbird flew off to some bushes about 100 m away. This pattern of behaviour was repeated several times during 30 minutes' observation.

A. K. JONES

79 St George's Road, Stoke, Coventry CV1 2DJ

One adult male Blackbird feeding another At 11.10 GMT on 10th July 1978, I was casually watching two adult male Blackbirds *Turdus merula* as they fed on my lawn at Blunham, Bedfordshire. One (A) was collecting food in his bill, which I assumed he would take to nestling Blackbirds in a nearby shrub. Suddenly, the second male (B) ran swiftly across the lawn towards A, with his head held downwards. To my amazement, A offered a billful of worms and larvae to B, who promptly ate them. This apparently appeased B, whose approach had seemed to me to be aggressive. The event was, to my eyes, clearly proffering and acceptance, rather than food-piracy.

The two Blackbirds continued to feed on the lawn for another 20 minutes; they usually remained within 3 m of each other, A running swiftly to join B, or B to join A, whenever they became more widely separated. From 11.30 to 11.37 hours, B lay sun-bathing on the lawn while A fed around him, within 1 m. The feeding of one by the other was not repeated.

I could distinguish B from A by his more ruffled rump feathers, but otherwise the two birds were identical: not less than two years old, with wholly black plumage and wholly bright orange-yellow bills.

J. T. R. SHARROCK

Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3NJ

Blackbird killing and eating nestling House Sparrow Early in the afternoon of 10th July 1978, from the window of our house at Knutsford, Cheshire, my mother saw a young House Sparrow *Passer domesticus* only a few days old drop from the eaves above the window on to the edge of the lawn. In spite of its fall, it was still very much alive. A cock Blackbird *Turdus merula* feeding halfway down the lawn immediately hopped up to the young sparrow and began to attack it vigorously. My mother rushed out to intervene, but the Blackbird picked up the nestling in its bill and flew to the bottom end of the lawn, where it recommenced its assault. My mother again intervened, and this time the Blackbird abandoned its prey and flew off to a group of nearby trees. Although the incident lasted for only about one minute, the sparrow had been killed. No sooner had my mother returned to the house, than the Blackbird came back, quickly dismembered the nestling by pecking vigorously, and devoured it, legs and all.

J. TAYLOR

Milton Bank, Plumley, Knutsford, Cheshire WA16 9RZ

Blackbirds feeding on reptiles The note on a Blackbird *Turdus merula* eating the tail of a slow-worm *Anguis fragilis* (*Brit. Birds* 71: 131) prompts me to record the following. In spring 1970, in the 'nature reserve' of Kibbutz Netzer Sereni, Israel, my wife and some of her pupils watched a male Blackbird struggling with an eyed skink *Chalcides ocellatus* about 17 cm long. The latter—far too large and strong for the Blackbird—managed to escape several times; but suddenly it was caught by its tail, which it shed, thereby managing to disappear into the vegetation while the tail found its way into the Blackbird's stomach. In September 1975, I watched another male Blackbird trying furiously to extract something from under the roof tiles of one of the houses in the kibbutz. After several fruitless attempts, it finally caught a Turkish gecko *Hemidactylus turcicus* about 10 cm long; with this small reptile in its bill, it flew to a nearby lawn where it swallowed it. These seem to be the first records of Blackbirds feeding on reptiles in Israel.

HENK K. MIENIS

Kibbutz Netzer Sereni, 70-395 Israel

High nest of Fan-tailed Warbler in shrubby composite On 28th July 1974, 0.4 km inland from Puerto de la Selva, Costa Brava, Spain, I discovered the nest of a pair of Fan-tailed Warblers *Cisticola juncidis* still being built in the topmost leaves of the composite *Inula viscosa*, a lush, aromatic shrub. The nest was about 90 cm from the ground. *Inula* has terminal clusters of lance-shaped, sticky leaves which form a close bushy crown, giving good concealment. The nest was typical of the species: purse-shaped, very compact, of spiders' webs matted around the surface of one of the leaf clusters, thus gathering the leaves somewhat inwards to form the outer wall of the nest; the depth from the entrance hole at the top to the base of the nest was about 15 cm. The bush was part of a rough scrubby patch of *Inula* clumped together in the uncultivated corner of a sizeable

vineyard bounded by low loose-stone walls and, in places, hedges. The surrounding area consisted of thick, thorny scrub, vineyards, a few small grass meadows and an extensive area of market gardens divided up by very high windbreaks of giant reed *Arundo donax*, at the base of which were hedges of dense bramble *Rubus*. To the south of the site, along the low-lying coastal belt at Rosas, with lush marshy conditions, drainage channels and crop-lands, at least three Fan-tailed Warblers were breeding in more typical habitat of long, tough grass, rush *Juncus* and sedge *Carex*.

My thanks are due to Santiago Musquera of Barcelona for assistance in the identification of botanical specimens.

A. S. NORRIS

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Late arrival of Willow Warblers in recent years Attention has been drawn to the apparent late arrival of some summer migrants in recent years. Mason (1977) analysed first arrival dates of common summer migrants in Leicestershire during 1942-74 and concluded that, on average, most had been arriving a few days later in 1969-74 than in 1942-68. He suggested that this was correlated with the cooler spring weather of recent years and pointed out that this reversed the general trend of earlier arrivals during the last 30 years compared with previous years' records (Hudson 1973). The collection and analysis of first arrival dates is worthy of attention on a wider scale. These alone, however, do not necessarily reflect trends in the timing of the main migratory movements, and bird-observatory data are probably of little help in this respect. Data from two studies of breeding Willow Warblers *Phylloscopus trochilus*, however, enable a more detailed analysis for that species. The first was carried out by May (1947, 1949) during 1944-46 at Englefield Green, Surrey; and my own, on colour-ringed individuals, started in 1976 at Witley Common, Surrey. In both studies, records were kept of the arrival dates of warblers comprising the breeding populations. May's (1949) graph of the arrivals of males in 1946 is reconstructed alongside my own for 1977-79 (fig. 1). The differences are striking: although at the beginning and end of the arrival periods the timings differ by about one week, the dates by which 50% of the populations had arrived differ by nearly a fortnight. Not only would the main arrival appear to be later in recent years, therefore, but also compressed into a shorter period of time. The inconspicuous females tend to arrive some two weeks later than males and are difficult to keep track of; it would seem, however, that differences in their arrival times between May's and my own warblers are similar to those of the males.

In view of the late arrivals in recent years, it is interesting to compare the timings of the breeding seasons using nest record data from the same two studies. First-egg dates calculated from May's (1947) data average around 30th April (a date at which my first females are usually only just beginning to arrive), whereas those from my own studies average around 10th May (using first brood data only). There is no indication that the warblers are tending to remain later on the breeding grounds than formerly in order to compensate for the later arrival, but there is a strong suggestion that the

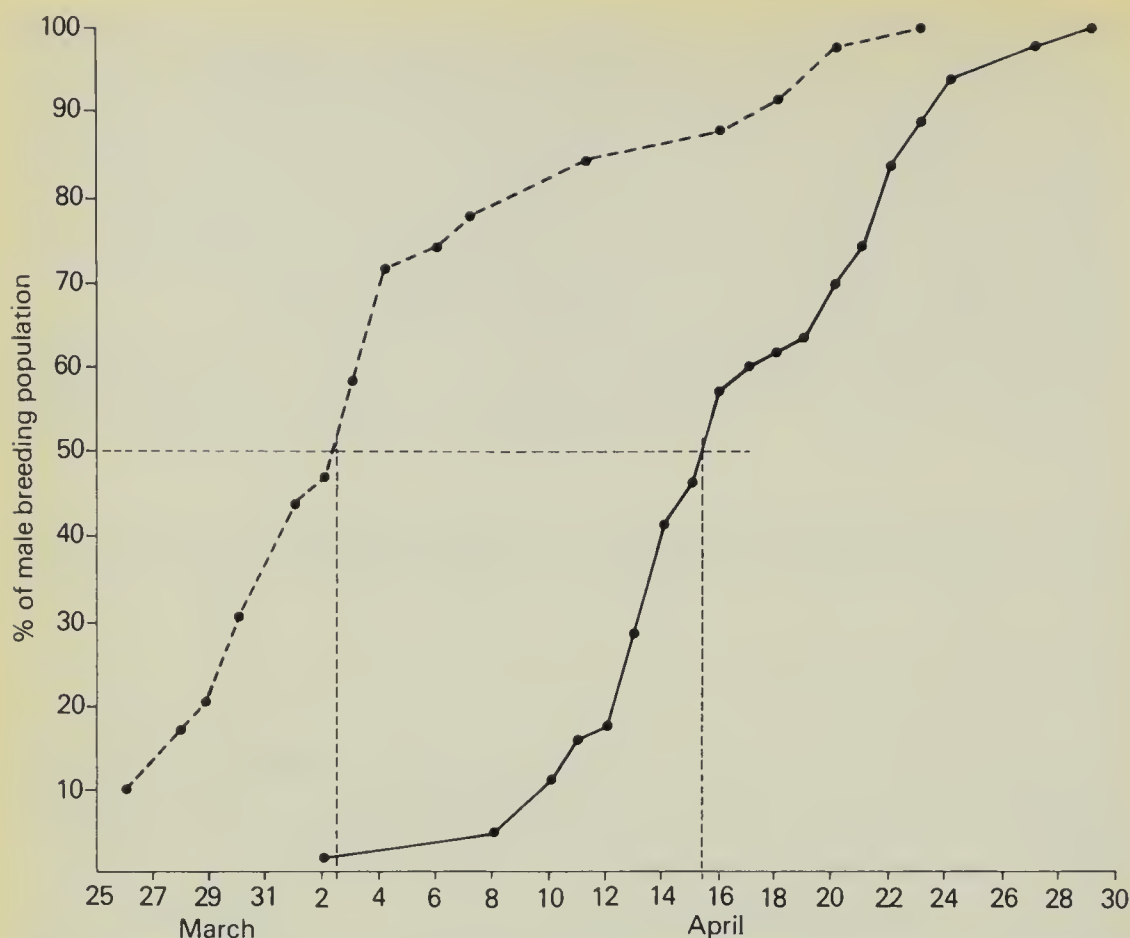


Fig. 1. Spring arrivals of male Willow Warblers *Phylloscopus trochilus* in Surrey. Dotted line: based on 31 individuals at Englefield Green in 1946 (after May 1949); solid line: based on 63 records of colour-ringed individuals at Witley Common during 1977-79

frequency of second broods has been considerably reduced since May's studies. The recent later spring arrival, therefore, would seem to result in a shortening of the breeding season. The subject clearly requires investigation on a wider scale, and data on more northerly populations would be of particular interest.

M. R. LAWN

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We agree with Mr Lawn that the subject requires more investigation; further detailed observations will be welcomed. EDS

Three Rooks at one nest As part of a study of the social behaviour of the Rook *Corvus frugilegus* at the University of Edinburgh, a rookery of 56 nests at Gilston, 32 km south of Edinburgh, was studied during the 1978 breeding season. A single tree 50m from the main group was selected for intensive

study; its four nests were 5-10m from the ground, so reasonably good visibility was assured. All observations were made from a 'Land Rover' parked on the road 10m from the tree. On 3rd March, the male from one nest was regularly accompanied by another Rook of unknown sex when he returned to feed his incubating mate and when he left on foraging trips. The female was easily identified by her very prominent brood patch. On 4th, the first eggs hatched and the same behaviour was observed, the additional Rook approaching the female very closely while she was being fed and uttering a subdued call. On one occasion, the additional bird remained by the nest after the male left to forage, and repeatedly approached the sitting female, who attacked it each time, often leaving the nest to drive it away. After five such attacks, the encroaching Rook joined the male in the feeding field. On 7th, the female was building up the walls of the nest, generally flying down to collect material after being fed by the male. The nest was often left unattended for periods of up to two minutes while she gathered twigs; the accompanying Rook showed great interest in the nest, but was always rapidly expelled by the returning female.

On 10th, about 7cm of snow had fallen overnight; I observed the nest from 19.00 GMT until dark at 21.15. The accompanying Rook was extremely active, flying around the nest with twigs in its bill, making repeated attempts to add to the nest; it always landed on the same branch and made towards the nest, but was attacked by the female when about 10cm away. This behaviour was repeated at about one-minute intervals over a 22-minute period. The male made frequent visits to the nest, at first with food and later just sitting on a branch near the nest, but made no apparent reaction to the accompanying Rook. (Because of the dull light, I cannot rule out the possibility that I mistook the identities of the three Rooks, but I believe my observations which follow are accurate.) The female then left the nest and sat on a nearby branch, allowing the additional bird to add its twig to the nest and then to sit on the young; she then allopreened her mate on a branch about 1m from the nest. At 20.22 hours, the male and female left to feed; at 21.10, the third Rook was still in the nest and the feeding flock had joined the rookery to roost; the male and female had not returned to the nest when the light was so low that observation was difficult. The temperature at 21.10 hours was -2°C , and it seems unlikely that the chicks (the oldest of which was six days old) would have survived the night if the third Rook had not been sitting on them.

The sex and breeding status of the accompanying Rook were unknown. One possible explanation is that it was a female which had lost her brood, or had been otherwise unsuccessful in her breeding.

PAUL T. GREEN

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Ian J. Patterson has given the following comments on this observation. 'Additional individuals at nests in rookeries are not uncommon in Aberdeenshire, where a small proportion of females remain unmated. Some have attached themselves to pairs and behaved generally as described by Mr Green; others built their own nests, attached to another pair's nest, laid eggs and incubated, but no young survived. Most were fed by the male of the pair, but were attacked by the female. In the incident observed by Mr Green, since the Rooks were not

marked and observations were made in the last 48 minutes before dark, there seems a possibility of mistaken identity: the additional bird may have gone off with the male (as it had frequently before), leaving in fact the female on the nest.' Eds

Brambling breeding in Scotland On 23rd June 1979, STB found a female Brambling *Fringilla montifringilla* in a birch-wood in the Grampian Region. It fed for about 15 minutes, and then disappeared in the foliage of a birch *Betula*. On 30th June, STB returned and, although no Bramblings were seen, an unfamiliar song was heard three times over a period of about two minutes: two fairly short, harsh notes followed by a 'dzee' recalling the sound made by a Greenfinch *Carduelis chloris*. The suspicion that the song was from a Brambling was confirmed after listening to Scandinavian recordings.

Two days later, on 2nd July, STB and AGK entered the wood and almost immediately saw a bird, which proved to be a female Brambling, settle on a nest high in a birch tree. We watched the nest from 12.05 to 13.43 GMT, during which period the Brambling left to feed five times, returning four to seven minutes (average 5¼ minutes) later. The interval between arriving back on the nest and departing again was 12-18 minutes (average 15½ minutes). The bird left and returned silently; departure was quick; the bird dropping out of the nest and flying about 50m, where it landed on the lower limbs of birch trees and was soon lost from sight. We did not follow it from the nest. The bird's arrival back was straight into the canopy of the tree and, from there, quickly to the nest in a couple of hops from branch to branch; it then dropped into the cup and, after a short shuffle, settled. This behaviour led us to believe that the bird was incubating eggs.

The female was followed back to near the nest on two of the five occasions by a male Chaffinch *F. coelebs*, which otherwise appeared to show no interest in either the female or the nest. What we believed to be the same male Chaffinch was seen several times in other parts of the birch wood. We consider it unlikely that it was mated to the Brambling, since a male Brambling was also present in the same small wood, and was in fact heard calling and singing sporadically through the period of our observations on 2nd July.

The nest was very Chaffinch-like, although perhaps a little wider across the base. It was constructed of grasses, fine roots, lichens and wool, and was placed in a fork of the main trunk near the bottom of the rather thin canopy and about 1.5m from the highest point of the tree. The wood consisted of approximately 2ha of mature birches about 10m tall and fairly evenly spaced 5-10m apart. There were several standing dead trees, but no regeneration or shrub layer. The ground layer was mainly grasses and heather *Calluna*. There was one clearing with several small, wet patches of slowly running water. The wood graded into mixed birch-conifers on three sides. All but one of the contacts with Bramblings were within the 2ha area of birch near the nest, where the only other passerines seen were Redstart *Phoenicurus phoenicurus*, Willow Warbler *Phylloscopus trochilus*, Spotted Flycatcher *Muscicapa striata*, Blue Tit *Parus caeruleus* and Chaffinch.

On 8th July, the nest was watched from a distance for two hours in light rain, during which time no Bramblings were seen. The nest was believed to

have been deserted and was inspected using a mirror. There was some foliage in the cup, and the rim was untidy. A minimum of three eggs could be seen. The nest was lined with several white feathers. Using the mirror-pole, the height of the nest was measured as 7.25 m.

On the final visit, on 13th July, STB found that the nest had been tipped over and was hanging from the fork. A search of the ground revealed one broken and one intact egg, which was removed under licence and later examined by Dr H. M. Hamadani, who discovered that it contained a small, long-dead embryo. The egg-shell has been deposited at the British Museum, Tring.

There is only one previous documented record of Brambling nesting in Britain, although it is reported to have bred in Perth, Ross and Inverness (BOU 1971) among other places. The accepted record was of a nest in Sutherland in 1920 (Hodgkin & Hodgkin 1920): building started on 19th May, seven eggs were laid by 31st May, and the eggs were taken on 3rd June; the nest was 25 feet (7.6 m) up in a fork of a Scots pine *Pinus sylvestris*, in a wood of that species mixed with a few larches *Larix*. The male was reported as being hard to find after nest-building began.

In Scandinavia, Bramblings frequently occur as casual nesters to the south of the normal breeding range. This is thought to occur because some fail to leave the wintering area either in years of mass wintering in a particular area (Eriksson 1970; Kalela 1949 quoted by Eriksson) or in years with cold springs when the return migration is not completed (Hilden & Linkola 1962, quoted by Eriksson 1970; Kalela 1938, quoted by Newton 1972). The numbers of Bramblings present in northeast Scotland during late winter/early spring 1979 were larger than in the last ten years (at least), except 1972, when there was one exceptionally large flock reported in May. Provisional meteorological data indicate that the spring of 1979 was also one of the coldest and latest this century. For these reasons, we believe that the breeding of Brambling in the Grampian Region in 1979 may not have been part of the general trend of colonisation of Scotland by Scandinavian species (Murray 1979), but an isolated incident resulting from the large numbers wintering in the area, and the unusually cold spring weather.

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Birds feeding on snowberries The editorial comment to my note on Blue Tits *Parus caeruleus* and a Robin *Erithacus rubecula* feeding on snowberries *Symphoricarpos rivularis* (*Brit. Birds* 71: 133) stated: 'We do not recall ever

seeing a bird eating snowberries and have found no reference to this in the literature.' I would draw your attention to my note on Bullfinches *Pyrrhula pyrrhula* eating snowberries (*Brit. Birds* 61: 270). In addition, in my garden at Brentry, Bristol, I have seen Greenfinches *Carduelis chloris* pulling at the pulp of these berries to expose the seeds, which they then ate; I watched this behaviour almost daily during November and December 1977 and January 1978. Also, during December 1977, I often saw male and female Blackbirds *Turdus merula* swallowing whole snowberries, usually dark, over-ripe ones which had fallen to the ground; and male and female Bullfinches feeding on snowberry pulp. B. E. Slade (*in litt.*) has also drawn attention to an earlier note of mine, concerning Collared Doves *Streptopelia decaocto* eating snowberries (*Brit. Birds* 60: 218). I suspect that the habit is commoner than is generally realised, certainly in my area. (I might add that we have a snowberry bush outside our kitchen window, which makes observation of feeding birds easy for my wife and myself.)

A. P. RADFORD

2 Wyck Beck Road, Brentry, Bristol BS10 7JE

Since coming to live in Ipswich, Suffolk, in 1972, both my wife and I have seen Blackbirds and Song Thrushes *T. philomelos* taking snowberries in our garden.

R. B. WARREN

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Further to Dr Radford's note and the accompanying editorial comment, I should like to add the following. On 30th November 1974, near Chalford, Gloucestershire, my daughter and I watched at short range two wintering female Blackcaps *Sylvia atricapilla* feeding voraciously on snowberries in a roadside hedgerow. They were still eating the berries when we drove on about ten minutes later.

JOHN F. BURTON

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John V. Dennis, who has made a study in the USA of garden plants used as food by birds, has summarised for us the information available to him on the snowberry. Opinions are divergent: from 'I have grown snowberry . . . a few yards from a bird feeder for 15 years and have yet to see a bird eat the initially attractive marble-like fruits . . .' (McGourby 1977, *Wildlife Plants for Beauty and the Birds*) to 'an extremely valuable winter food source for both gamebirds and songbirds such as thrushes, cardinals, towhees, grosbeaks and waxwings' (Barrington *et al.* 1971, *The Joys of a Garden for your Birds*). Mr Dennis concludes that the truth probably lies somewhere between these widely differing viewpoints, and that the relative unpopularity of snowberry may be due to the white colour of its fruits (the red fruits of the closely related coralberry *S. orbiculatus* are much more often consumed by birds). Eds

The 'Skokholm Hide': a new concept in permanent-hide design

Prototypes of a novel design for a bird hide (fig. 1), built on Skokholm, Pembrokeshire, Dyfed, have proved to be very strong, easy to build, cheap, inconspicuous, comfortable and remarkably roomy (it is even possible to use a tripod in the hide).

The 'Skokholm Hide' consists of front and back panels, which can be of plywood sheet, old floorboards or almost any other strong material, attached to two triangular end-frames. A hinged flap provides an

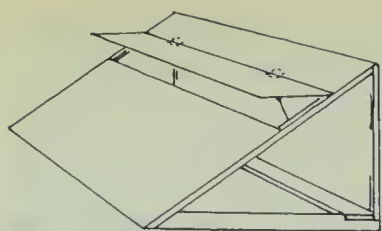


Fig. 1. The Skokholm Hide

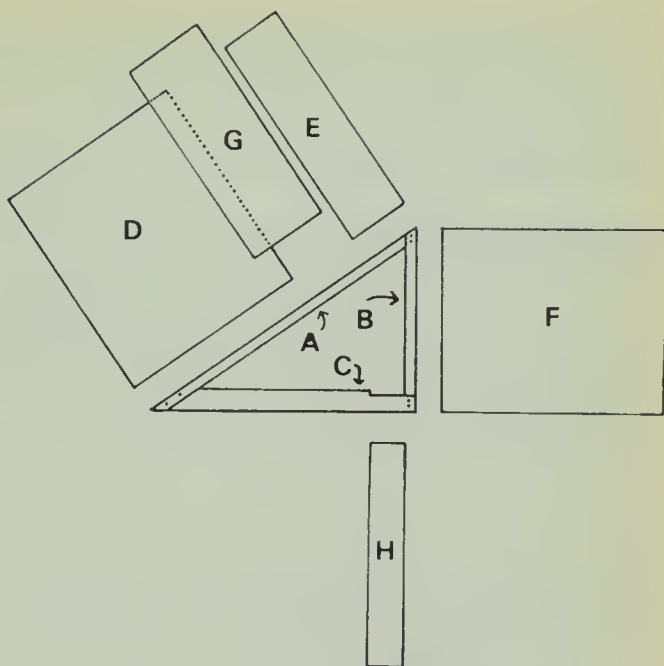


Fig. 2. Components needed for the Skokholm Hide

observation window and a low bench seat is provided. End panels or flaps can easily be added to either side for extra warmth and cover. The following major components are needed for a two/three man hide (see fig. 2):

- | | | |
|---|---|---------------|
| A | Two beams $220 \times 5 \times 5$ cm | } end frames |
| B | Two beams $125 \times 5 \times 5$ cm | |
| C | Plank $180 \times 15 \times 2$ cm | } wall panels |
| D | Front panel 130×150 cm | |
| E | Roof panel 40×150 cm | |
| F | Back panel 125×150 cm | |
| G | Plywood panel 55×150 cm (note 5-cm overlap) | window flap |
| H | Rigid plank (e.g. scaffold plank) 155 cm long | bench |
| I | Two 5-cm brass hinges; two casement stays; about 25 nails or screws | |

The structure is stable in gale-force winds without requiring attachment to the ground and, thus, is easily moved from one site to another.

STEPHEN WARMAN and CAROL HELLAWELL
Skokholm Bird Observatory, Marloes, Haverfordwest, Dyfed

Letters

Importance of Ireland's Brent Geese In his account of 'Ireland's winter visitors and passage migrants', C. D. Hutchinson (*Brit. Birds* 73: 72-80) noted that the Brent Goose *Branta bernicla* is now the most numerous goose in Ireland and concluded that 'The Irish birds are of interest mainly as the European representatives of a population which winters commonly on the Atlantic coast of North America and is not in any great danger.' The same impression might be obtained from reading recent North American handbooks, but I believe it to be misleading and hence potentially mischievous.

Though the Brent Geese wintering in Ireland are pale-bellied, with rather complete—but short—white necklaces, and so look much like those

wintering on the US Atlantic coast, they come from a breeding range which is at present almost certainly wholly distinct from that of the more numerous American-wintering stock. The Irish-wintering birds, breeding in the Queen Elizabeth Islands and in very small numbers in northern Greenland, are undoubtedly more plentiful and less threatened than those breeding in Spitsbergen, which they also resemble; but they should be cherished as a small, independent stock which will require special attention in the next 20 years as their breeding sites come under increasing attack from oil-, gas- and mineral-exploitation. Resource developers have a strong preference for building on or tearing up the very limited amounts of well-vegetated lowlands in the Queen Elizabeth Islands, which are essential for the well-being of Brent Geese and other herbivores in late summer. A proposed marine oil development off Ellef Ringnes Island would require onshore installations provisionally intended to be sited on the best goose habitat there, and the principal site on Bathurst Island is threatened by the construction of a pipeline.

Mr Hutchinson referred to peak numbers of 16,000 in Ireland in the winter of 1973/74. Since that time, three of the six summers during 1974-79 have been unfavourable for successful breeding, so that the population has decreased. The latest complete count was of 9,164 in January 1978 (*Irish Birds* 1: 422-423). There seems no reason to expect an increase in the frequency of favourable summers in the Canadian High Arctic.

The areas used by summering Brent Geese in the Queen Elizabeth Islands nearly all lie below the marine limit: that is, in areas where marine processes have reworked the surface materials and enhanced their fertility. Most of the areas now used have emerged from the sea only in the last few hundred years, so that their colonisation by geese is relatively recent. In the severe conditions of the High Arctic Desert, losses—as well as gains—of breeding birds must be expected to occur frequently. Those of us interested in the preservation of birds should resist human assaults on northern birds and should not assume that they can readily be replaced from elsewhere.

HUGH BOYD

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Flying speed of Sparrowhawk Where will science lead us? Remembering the accuracy of car speedometers as well as the problem of precise pacing of a flying bird, I wondered how Carl G. Jones (*Brit. Birds* 73: 159) could have measured the speed of his Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus* as 64kph: by implication, accurate to at least 1 in 64 (i.e. better than 2%). But, of course, scientific measurements must be expressed in these still unfamiliar units of kilometres in place of miles. A little calculation, however, showed that his speedometer needle was around the 40 mile per hour mark. I am sure this would mean more to most readers than that apparently scientific 64kph, with its implication of quite spurious accuracy.

B. L. HANCOCK

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The apparently accurate 64kph achieved by the Sparrowhawk paced by Carl G. Jones was doubtless actually approximately 40 miles per hour.

R. A. HUME

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The accuracy with which Carl G. Jones recorded the Sparrowhawk flying at 64kph is of no avail in the absence of equally accurate information on the speed and direction of the wind relative to the bird's flight: it may have had the benefit of considerable tail-wind. Only comparative air-speeds are of interest, and they are equal to the ground speed only in conditions of nil wind.

P. J. SELLAR

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Behaviour of Oystercatchers and Turnstones before overland migration

By 16.30 GMT on 15th April 1978, at Bradwell, Essex, after a showery day with a northerly wind, the wind had dropped, the cloud dispersed and visibility was crystal clear. At 16.50, the main roost of Oystercatchers *Haematopus ostralegus* started excited calling, and, almost at once, a dense mass of 70 rose perpendicularly. Oystercatchers flighting out to the cockle beds normally become very noisy just before departure, but this flock headed north in a steady climb, flying out over the estuary in a way that waders commuting towards feeding grounds never do. It was high water and the ebb was not due for at least an hour. Some filtered back to roost, but the main party progressed and, by the time they crossed Mersea Island (see fig. 1), they were at 1,000 feet (305m) in a ragged V formation. Their early progress was wavering and indecisive: they turned first one way then the other, as though seeking visual clues; more than once it seemed they might change their minds and return, but eventually they were lost to sight, apparently continuing strongly inland. During the next 40 minutes, two further groups followed: one on a more westerly course across the Old Hall Marshes, the other flying into the Colne Estuary towards Brightlingsea. Each flight path would have taken them inland over north Essex and west Suffolk, perhaps to The Wash, Lincolnshire/Norfolk.

The following day, at Foulness Point, 24km to the south, there was virtually a repeat performance, but this time the Oystercatchers headed due west along the Crouch estuary.

At 16.20 GMT on 16th May 1978, on the Old Hall Marshes, there was an enormous commotion of Turnstones *Arenaria interpres*: a flock of 70 was circling the marshes so high as to be barely visible through binoculars. They were followed by two further groups. In each case, there was the same near-ecstatic calling, the reluctance and disorientation, and the almost processional progress observed with the Oystercatchers, before they finally headed strongly northwest inland in a blunt V formation. Conditions were sunny, with a northeast wind and perfect visibility; the tide was high, and it seemed in each case that the Turnstones gathered at roost for at least an hour before departing. They were last observed about 1.6km inland, still flying strongly and having ignored all potential roosts. Although their destination may have been The Wash, they could equally have continued

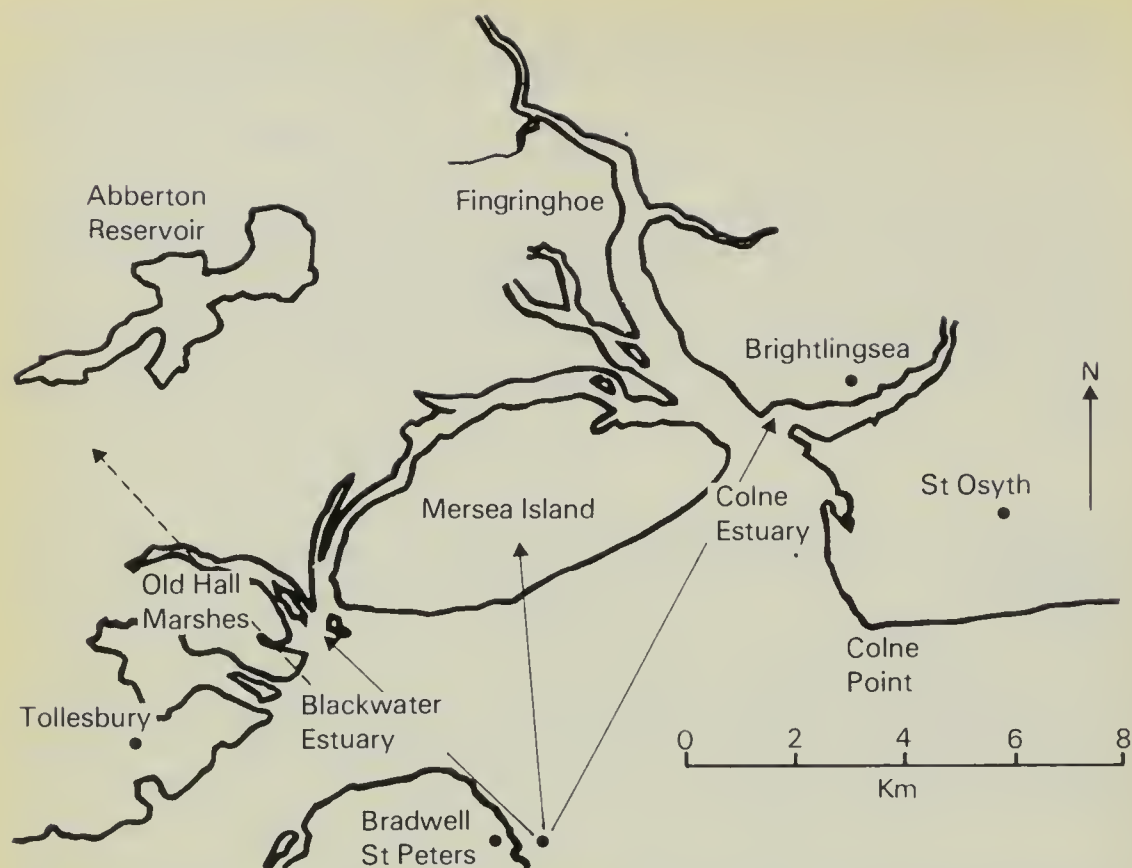


Fig. 1. Routes followed by Oystercatchers *Haematopus ostralegus* (solid arrows) and Turnstones *Arenaria interpres* (dotted arrow) migrating inland from the Essex coast, spring 1978

farther north during the night, or even crossed to the west coast. Oddly, the few spring records of wader migration over Essex have always concerned birds flying southwest to northeast.

I should be interested to hear, at the address below, from anyone with similar observations on wader behaviour before overland migration.

BOB GLOVER

Hedge Hills, Etheldore Avenue, Hockley, Essex

We are publishing this letter since nothing appears to have been recorded in the literature on the subject. We would, however, emphasise that similar observations be sent to Mr Glover as requested, and not to *British Birds*. Eds

Robin-like feeding by Stonechat Sheila Bottomley's note (*Brit. Birds* 71: 84) reminded me that, after a winter spent working as a labourer for the Forestry Commission in 1934/35 at Loch Ard Forest, Strathclyde, I wrote of the Stonechat *Saxicola torquata*: 'The Robin [*Erithacus rubecula*] of the moors: throughout the winter the most regularly seen of all species, searching the newly turned drains and perching on the rutting spades at lunch-time.' (*Scot. Nat.* 211: 151-159). The area we were draining was at least 2 km from any occupied habitation and was then bare moorland. Since the drains were dug through peat to a gravelly subsoil, I have often wondered what the Stonechats found to eat and have regretted that I did not make any serious observations on this.

BRUCE CAMPBELL

West End Barn, Wootton, Woodstock, Oxford OX7 1DL

Another mystery photograph: Moustached or Sedge Warbler? While writing a contribution to 'Studies of west Palearctic birds' on the Moustached Warbler *Acrocephalus melanopogon*, I sought photographs of the species. The only recent series known to me was taken in Austria, one of which was published in *British Birds* (68: plate 33). This photograph (repeated here as plate 198), and more in the series, proved insufficient to illustrate the characteristic features of Moustached Warbler and its differences from the similar Sedge Warbler *A. schoenobaenus* as set out by Williamson (1968). Especially, the supercilium is not particularly bold and appears to fade into the hind crown; the ear-coverts are not dark enough to produce the appearance of a white 'moustache' (actually submoustachial stripe); the crown is far from appearing almost black; and (not mentioned by Williamson, but evident in other photographs and even field guides) the mantle lacks any really bold dark stripes. Other photographs of Moustached Warbler (*Brit. Birds* 47: plates 1-4), the first of which was also published in Williamson (1968, plate 4), and which is repeated here as plate 199, shows these features plainly. Plate 199 shows the less clearly marked individual of this French pair, which was assumed to be the female; the presumed male had the crown much blacker and the upper breast a clearer white.

Can Moustached Warblers resemble Sedge Warblers as closely as does this Austrian pair, or are the photographs in fact of Sedge Warblers (both species breed in this area)? I showed them to several people acquainted with Moustached Warbler; no-one was rash enough to make a firm pronouncement on the strength of black-and-white photographs, but the general feeling was that they appeared to portray Sedge Warblers.

Since there are large differences of wing formulae between the two species (Williamson 1968), I measured a high-quality print of the clearest photograph (plate 198) and compared it with measurements of 25 live Moustached Warblers from southern France (data kindly supplied by Giles Pepler and Derek Thomas) and 25 live Sedge Warblers from Cambridgeshire. I investigated six critical points; the results are set out in table 1 (see pages 368 & 369).

Taken together, these six features (at least five of which are independent), point without shadow of doubt to the bird in plate 198 being a Sedge Warbler. Separately, some of my assessments might be open to question, but not all together. A further possible point concerns emargination: Moustached is emarginated on 3rd-5th, but Sedge only on 3rd; in plate 198, the 4th and 5th primaries are visible and appear not to be emarginated, again indicating Sedge Warbler.

Apart from writing this letter to maintain *British Birds*' usual standard in matters of identification, a more general point struck me when reading the Cleveland warbler saga (*Brit. Birds* 72: 348-351), as well as in this case. Wing formulae given by Williamson lack standard deviations, so that it is not possible to tell whether a difficult individual bird falls within the normal range of its postulated species or not. Ringers operating in the breeding or wintering areas of warblers rare to Britain would be doing a useful service by measuring a sample, of say 25 individuals, and publishing mean wing

Table 1. Comparison of measurements of bird in plate 198 (originally published in *Brit. Birds* 68: plate 33) with wing formulae of Sedge *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus* and Moustached Warblers *A. melanopogon*

* = data from Williamson (1968), mean only given because range not calculable; otherwise unpublished data from live birds. ** = 95% range

Feature	Plate 198	Sedge Warbler	Moustached Warbler
1. Wing : tail ratio	1.4-1.7	1.35*	1.13*
2. Wing-length (mm)	67	61-69**	52-58**
3. Wing-point to secondaries (mm)	14.5-17.6	15-23**	8-12**
4. Tertial length in relation to secondaries	+ 1 mm	> SS	< SS
5. Wing-point (primary number)	3	3	4 (=5)
6. First primary in relation to primary coverts	Not visible	pc - 4 mm	pc + 6.7 mm

198. Warbler *Acrocephalus*, Austria, June 1974 (*K. J. Carlson*), originally published (*Brit. Birds* 68: plate 33) as Moustached *A. melanopogon*, but now reidentified independently by Dr C. J. Bibby and Andrew Dull as Sedge *A. schoenobaenus*



1. *Wing : tail ratio* This is difficult to measure because it involves deciding where the base of the tail would be. With generous allowance, the ratio on the photograph lies between 1.4 and 1.7.
 2. *Wing-length estimated from wing : tarsus ratio* As printed, the bird has a wing-length of 55 mm, which might be 57 mm as a maximum chord measurement, and a tarsus of 18 mm. Scaling up to a tarsus of 21 mm (the mean of the two species, which differ by only 1.6 mm in this character), the bird in plate 198 would have a wing-length of 67 mm.
 3. *Wing-point to secondaries* This distance is 15 mm on the print. Scaled to the wing-length estimated above, this would become 17.6 mm. Scaling to the mean wing-lengths of the two species would give values of 14.5 mm or 17.1 mm.
 4. *Tertial length relative to secondaries* The longest tertial can clearly be seen to overlap the secondaries by about 1 mm. This feature is visible because the tertial on top is pointed, whereas the secondaries below are broader and rounded.
 5. *Wing-point* On the print, the primaries can readily be counted and the point is primary 3. This feature can just be detected in the published version, though primary 10 is difficult to see because its outer web is abraded and lacks a pale fringe.
 6. *Length of first primary* The first primary is not visible in any of the photographs. This suggests—but does not prove—that it is minute. Were the first primary 7 mm longer than the primary coverts, it would probably—but not certainly—be visible on one of the prints.
-

formulae from live birds, together with their standard deviations.

Finally, publication of the proposed 'Studies of west Palearctic birds' on the Moustached Warbler is postponed until further photographs become available. It seems amazing that good-quality, recent photographs of a

199. Moustached Warbler *Acrocephalus melanopogon* (probably female), France, May 1953
(C. C. Doncaster)



species which breeds in places as accessible as Mallorca and the Camargue do not appear to exist. Can any reader help?

C. J. BIBBY

RSPB, The Lodge, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 2DL

REFERENCE

WILLIAMSON, K. 1968. *Identification for Ringers. 1. The Genera Cettia, Locustella, Acrocephalus and Hippolais*. Tring.

I wish to draw attention to what I believe to be an important error. The bird depicted in plate 33 of volume 68 of *British Birds* (repeated here as plate 198) was captioned as being a Moustached Warbler, but I believe it to be a Sedge Warbler. At Neusiedlersee, Austria, some years ago, I watched these two warblers together at close range, and was immediately struck by the distinctiveness of Moustached, which, in comparison with Sedge, shows (1) bolder dark lines on the mantle, (2) darker crown, with less obvious streaking, (3) contrasting rufous 'shawl' and (4) obvious white supercilium, contrasting sharply with crown and, to a lesser extent, with the dark cheeks.

Admittedly, these are largely matters of degree, but the general impression of Moustached is, I believe, quite unmistakable and totally at odds with the bird in plate 198. One further point, although perhaps harder to substantiate, depends on how you read the wing formula of the bird in plate 198 (the fact that this can be attempted is a credit to the photographer and the quality of the plate). My impression is that only the third primary is emarginated; if so, this supports identification as Sedge.

ANDREW DUFF

7 Lime Close, Selwood Park, Frome, Somerset BA11 2TX

Avian navigation - I was greatly interested in Professor W. T. Keeton's recent paper (*Brit. Birds* 72: 451-470) on avian orientation and navigation, and, although not qualified to comment on the experimental work, I should like to make some observations on gravity and barometric pressure detection.

First, Professor Keeton mentions a possible ability to detect minute changes in gravity, and points out that compensation for altitude would be necessary in view of its decrease in the vertical. Since, however, the value at, say, 3 km is only about 0.1% of that at sea level, it is insignificant when compared with the 30% fall in atmospheric pressure in the same depth of atmosphere.

Secondly, any supposition that birds can detect pressure changes must consider sensitivity, as changes in the horizontal and vertical pressure gradients are of very different orders. In the vertical, a migrant will experience a fall of 150 millibars by rising from sea level to 1500 m, and one millibar in a few seconds just by flying up into a tree. In the horizontal, a change of one millibar may take over three hours to occur, and 30 minutes even when approaching a vigorous developing depression. In addition to this, changes in dynamic pressure (i.e. air resistance to a body) can often swamp even the latter. A barometer is isolated from such fluctuations, but a bird, static or flying, can experience changes of up to 5 millibars in a few seconds in a gusty, gale-force wind, although the size of the change will depend on its attitude, and will be less when head-on to the wind and therefore streamlined.

A human meteorologist uses all the data—both visual and instrumental—at his disposal, to arrive at an assessment of the current state of the atmosphere, and no one parameter is of much value in isolation. I suspect that a bird may make a similar assessment, and that it is the total combination of elements, many of which are themselves directly controlled by atmospheric pressure changes, that influences its behaviour.

NORMAN ELKINS

Meteorological Office, Royal Air Force, Lossiemouth, Morayshire IV31 6SD

Professor Keeton has replied as follows: 'Mr Elkins raises the point of problems in the sensitivity of the birds' detection of atmospheric pressure changes, which I mentioned would be required if they are to be able to compensate for altitude in order to be able to read variations in gravity. He is certainly correct in pointing out that the change in pressure is much greater than the change in gravity with altitude. While we do not have final figures on the sensitivity of the birds' detection system, what evidence there is suggests that in fact the birds are sufficiently sensitive to perform the tasks required.

'I shall not try to discuss all of the complications of the hypothesis of the coupling by the birds of pressure and gravity detection, but will merely say that Dr Kreithen and I have been fully aware of the problems raised by Elkins and have given a good deal of thought to them. Our preliminary conclusion is that these problems are not insurmountable and that our hypothesis is therefore worth continued testing.' Eds

English vernacular names of distinctive subspecies It is with increasing concern that I read references to such birds as 'a Carrion Crow *Corvus corone* of the race *cornix*' (*Brit. Birds* 72: 595) and a Teal *Anas crecca* 'showing the characters of the North American race *A. c. carolinensis*, colloquially known as the Green-winged Teal' (*Brit. Birds* 72: 513) when referring to the birds I call the Hooded Crow and the Green-winged Teal.

I am all in favour of the adoption of a stable sequence and scientific nomenclature for ornithological publications, and the 'Voous list' as adopted in your journal is widely accepted. What I object to, however, is the artificial tinkering with English vernacular names reflected in your policy of attributing one English name to certain species which have quite distinctively separate subspecies, the distinctiveness of which is acknowledged by their having different English names in common usage. I note with particular interest that the names attributed by you are, with only one exception, the names in common usage of the subspecies nesting in England: Rock Pipit for *Anthus spinoletta*, Yellow Wagtail for *Motacilla flava*, Pied Wagtail for *M. alba*, and Carrion Crow. The exception is Willow/Red Grouse for *Lagopus lagopus* where you yourselves suggest English nomenclature reflecting the two races (*Brit. Birds* 71: 3) on the grounds that long-established usage is likely to overrule the use of Willow Grouse for what I (and every birdwatcher I know) call Red Grouse.

Surely the English name of a bird should reflect common usage, the real meaning of the word 'vernacular'. As Partridge writes (1973, *Usage and Abuse*, revised edition, page 345), the vernacular is that naturally spoken by the people of a particular country or district. Why should a Scot or an Irishman refer to a Hooded Crow as a Carrion Crow of the race *cornix*, or an Englishman in France seeing a Blue-headed Wagtail and a White Wagtail (both after all of the nominate subspecies) refer to them as a Yellow Wagtail

of the race *flava* and a Pied Wagtail of the race *alba*? The scientific nomenclature has been thoroughly examined by Voous; are you, sirs, not guilty of pedantry in trying to impose the use of the names adopted for the races of certain birds occurring commonly in southern England on those of us who live elsewhere in these islands or on the Continent yet speak the English language and see birds which look somewhat different from those you see? For me, a Blue-headed Wagtail and a White Wagtail are quite distinctive birds and I suggest that the common usage be retained. And you will never get me to call *Corvus corone cornix* a Carrion Crow.

C. D. HUTCHINSON

20 Dundanion Court, Blackrock, Cork, Ireland

In 1977, a small committee was set up by the BOU, the BTO, the Wildfowl Trust and the RSPB to advise on the English names of birds on the British list; it consisted of one representative from each of the four bodies and one from *British Birds*. The committee was unanimous in endorsing the principle set out over 30 years ago by the late B. W. Tucker (*Brit. Birds* 42: 129-134, 161-174, 193-205) that the ordinary field ornithologist should be concerned primarily with species and not subspecies. Each species should, therefore, have a distinctive vernacular name, whereas each race should not. It is exceedingly confusing to beginners and to non-birdwatchers for English names to be given to a few races but not to the others which are equally valid and distinctive (e.g. Ashy-headed Wagtail, Black-headed Wagtail, Blue-headed Wagtail, Grey-headed Wagtail, Spanish Wagtail, Sykes's Wagtail and Yellow Wagtail for seven of the 18 or so races of *Motacilla flava*; and Pied Wagtail and White Wagtail for two of the 12 races of *M. alba*; but only Citrine Wagtail for all three races of *M. citreola*; and only Grey Wagtail for all five races of *M. cinerea*). The retention of vernacular names for mere races gives them an undue prominence.

Following this principle, the committee discussed and selected the most appropriate name for each species. Every race of *Anthus spinoletta* frequents rocks, but not all occur close to water, so Rock Pipit was chosen; every race of *Motacilla alba* is pied, but not all are white, so Pied Wagtail was chosen; every race of *Corvus corone* feeds on carrion, but not all are black-and-grey and hooded, so Carrion Crow was chosen. Occurrence in southern England was not a criterion; nor was the then-current name for the nominate race (which has no taxonomic significance: it is merely the race which happened to be described first by the discoverer of the species).

British Birds has followed all of the recommendations of the committee. In doing so, we aim not to impose our views but to set an example. EDS

Requests for information In my capacity as editor of a county bird report, I receive an ever-increasing flow of requests for information from amateur and professional ornithological authors. Of course, I try to help, but many—even those writing from official addresses—seem to expect me to bear the cost of postage and even long-distance telephone calls (although a few people do supply stamped addressed envelopes). Would it be possible for *British Birds* to establish a convention that enquiries should always be accompanied by a SAE for the reply?

JOHN V. BOYS

Editor, *Dorset Bird Report*, 21 Moor Road, Broadstone, Dorset BH18 8BA

We agree with Mr Boys and hope that this procedure will be adopted by those who write seeking information from county and regional bird recorders.

Similarly, we believe that those individuals and organisations which request information on some topic from readers of a journal such as *British Birds* should always acknowledge the receipt of relevant data; it is on the understanding that this will be done that we accept items for inclusion in our 'Requests' section. EDS

Announcements

Postal auction of cover designs Starting with this month's cover of Great Shearwaters by Ken Baldridge, the line-drawings and scraper-board designs used on the front covers of *BB* will, whenever the artists give their permission, be available for purchase by readers. The original, unframed drawing will be sold to the reader who sends the highest postal (or telegram) bid received by the last day of the month. The person making the successful bid will be informed and will be expected to supply, by return post, a cheque/PO for the sum bid. *British Birds* will retain 20% as commission and to help defray administrative expenses; 80% will be passed to the artist. Send your name and address and your bid (no money at this stage) to: August Cover Bid, Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3NJ.

'The Birds of Lundy' Readers of *British Birds* can obtain this book at a special prepublication price (£2.75 post free, instead of £3.50). Due to be published on 15th November 1980, *The Birds of Lundy* reviews the records of all 274 species recorded on this famous Bristol Channel island. It has been compiled by J. N. Dymond, former secretary of the Rarities Committee, who was warden at the bird observatory on Lundy during 1972-73. Send your name and address and a cheque for £2.75 to the Devon Bird Watching and Preservation Society, c/o H. P. Sitters, Tanglewood, Plymbridge Road, Roborough, Plymouth.

Requests

Buckinghamshire breeding bird survey During 1980-84, fieldwork for a breeding bird atlas will be carried out on a tetrad (2 × 2km square) basis in Buckinghamshire under the auspices of the Middle Thames Natural History Society. All birdwatchers visiting the county are asked to submit any breeding record, even of the most common species. Offers of help with the survey, from Buckinghamshire residents and from visitors, will be very welcome and should be addressed to R. E. Youngman, 53 Seymour Park Road, Marlow, Buckinghamshire SL7 3ER.

Tape recordings of bird voices For a revised, cassette version of the *Peterson Field Guide to the Bird Songs of Britain and Europe* (currently on 15 LPs), tape recordings of the voices of the following species are needed:

BASIC SPECIES FROM MAIN BODY OF 3RD EDITION OF THE 'FIELD GUIDE' THAT DO NOT APPEAR ON THE DISCS

Andalusian Hemipode *Turnix sylvatica*
Houbara Bustard *Chlamydotis undulata*
Greater Sand Plover *Charadrius leschenaultii*
Slender-billed Curlew *Numenius tenuirostris*

White-winged Lark *Melanocorypha leucoptera*
Black Lark *M. yeltoniensis*
Azure Tit *Parus cyanus*

ACCIDENTALS AND OTHERS

Capped Petrel *Pterodroma hasitata*
Least Bittern *Ixobrychus exilis*
Western Reef Heron *Egretta gularis*
Black Duck *Anas rubripes*

Spectacled Eider *Somateria fischeri*
Lady Amherst's Pheasant *Chrysolophus amherstiae*
American Coot *Fulica americana*

Caspian Plover *Charadrius asiaticus*
 Eskimo Curlew *Numenius borealis*
 Solitary Sandpiper *Tringa solitaria*
 White-eyed Gull *Larus leucophthalmus*
 Lesser Crested Tern *Sterna bengalensis*

Spotted Sandgrouse *Pterocles senegallus*
 Indian Sand Lark *Calandrella raytal*
 Desert Warbler *Sylvia nana*
 Common Waxbill *Estrilda astrild*
 Pallas's Rosefinch *Carpodacus roseus*

ACCIDENTALS KNOWN TO HAVE OCCURRED IN EUROPE SINCE 3RD EDITION OF THE 'FIELD GUIDE'

Yellow-bellied Sapsucker *Sphyrapicus varius*
 Tennessee Warbler *Vermivora peregrina*

Cape May Warbler *Dendroica tigrina*

More importantly, recordings are badly needed of calls of value in field identification not included in the gramophone records (e.g. the flight calls of various waders and passerines). For example, the song of the Pechora Pipit *Anthus gustavi* is available, but not its flight call; there are many examples of this kind.

If you have—or know anyone else who has—relevant recordings, please write to Jeffery Boswall, Birdswell, Wraxall, Bristol BS19 1JZ.

Photographs of rarities Black-and-white prints of rare birds seen in Britain and Ireland during 1979 are needed for inclusion in the Rarities Committee's report in the November issue; 1980 rarity photographs will also be needed in due course. Prints for consideration for possible inclusion will be greatly welcomed. Unless accompanying descriptions for circulation to the Rarities Committee (in which case they should be sent to Michael J. Rogers), prints should be sent to the editorial address (see inside front cover).

News and comment

Peter Conder and Mike Everett

Record birdwatch The 'Country Life Record Birdwatch' team carried out their much-publicised attempt on a new one-day record number of species on 10th May 1980. Peter Smith and David Pearson, holders of the old record of 126, were in the team, along with David Tomlinson from *Country Life*; Jeremy Sorensen went along as unpaid bird recorder. Porsche GB lent the team a Porsche 924 for rapid movement about the place—but in fact only 120 miles (193km) were covered between Benacre and Orford in Suffolk. Starting at Minsmere at 03.45 GMT, the team logged 110 species before breakfast; 17 hours later, a Woodcock was the 133rd and last species for the day. The list was certainly a good one, and even included a Caspian Tern. All the fun and good twitching apart, the team raised through sponsorship £1,200 for the RSPB's Silver Meadows Fund. There are now rumours of an attempt on a Scottish record and no doubt there will be some on the new record of 133 too.

Scilly news Wearing his Scillies Records Panel hat, Mike Rogers has asked us to announce that this year the St Mary's log will be called in the Gig Bar of 'The Mermaid'

where more room should be available. The landlord has been briefed...

'Buck House Birdman' Birding commuters in the London area, opening their *Evening News* on the tube or bus on 20th May, will have seen the familiar face of Stanley Cramp, complete with half-raised binoculars, beaming out at them. Only the habitual cigarette was missing. Under a big headline 'Meet the Birdman of Buck House', a feature described our senior editor's varied and active life, from masterminding *BWP* to regularly surveying the birds in the grounds of Buckingham Palace, watching birds abroad and playing a leading role in world conservation. Obviously, Stanley needs no introduction to most of us, but it was good to see his many talents brought to the attention of a wider public.

Greek raptor reserve We hear relatively little about the status of birds of prey in Greece, so it was good news to learn from the December 1979 *IUCN Bulletin* that a forest area in northeast Greece has been set aside as a refuge for the 22 raptor species that breed there, thanks to joint action by the IUCN and the Greek government and their con-

sultant, Dutch ornithologist Ben Nallman. Although the refuge is somewhat smaller than the 9,800 ha originally proposed, it will include a useful buffer zone where commercial forestry activities will be controlled with bird-of-prey conservation very much in mind.

Code of conduct The summer 1980 issue of the RSPB journal *Birds* carries a 10-point 'Birdwatchers' Code' drawn up after consultation with the BOU, the BTO, the SOC, the Wildfowl Trust and the editors of *BB*. The points, which revolve around the welfare of birds, the protection of habitat and the rights of others using the countryside, are obvious enough and are probably all followed by 99% of us, but the code comes as a timely reminder, perhaps, to that other 1% who cause so much trouble, particularly where rarities are concerned, and sometimes give the rest of us a bad name. One very important point included in the code is that we should behave abroad as we do in this country: a pertinent point when we have just received a letter from Yassi Leshem in Israel bringing to our attention the disturbance caused to some of Israel's rarest breeding birds by visiting birders. Lappet-faced Vulture is a case in point. We were disturbed to see that maps are in circulation pinpointing nest-sites of such species and that scant attention seems to be paid by some visitors to local feelings or the efforts of Israeli con-

servationists. We hear similar stories from several European countries too . . .

A new journal Not long ago we received the first issue of 'Brutish Birds', a rival periodical which may threaten our very existence. Produced in splendid pre (Boer?) war format, complete with some amazing old advertisements, it includes a variety of amusing features, by far the best of which is a saga about twitching which every serious tally-hunter should read (he might even recognise himself therein . . .). It was some time before the editorial bivouac of 'Brutish Birds' was traced to none other than the august Edward Grey Institute of Field Ornithology at Oxford. As a spoof on current birding literature it must be without equal—even though we have to say that we might tend to walk away from conversations which include the phrase about imitation being the sincerest form of flattery . . . Well done, then, EGI! When can we expect a second issue?

New bird recorders for Derbyshire Following the retirement of David Amedro, the joint recorders for Derbyshire are now Rodney W. Key, 168 Waterford Drive, Chaddesden, Derby DE2 6TU (who will be responsible for the records committee and rarity records), and Roy A. Frost, 66 St Lawrence Road, North Wingfield, Chesterfield (who will be responsible for surveys and rare breeding records).

Opinions expressed in this feature are not necessarily those of the editors of British Birds

Recent reports

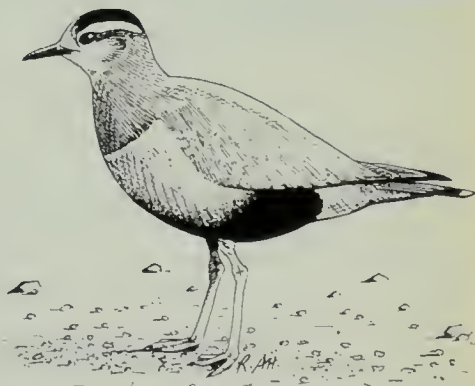
*R. A. Hume and
K. Allsopp*

These are largely unchecked reports, not authenticated records

Unless otherwise stated, dates in this report refer to May.

Unusually settled, warm, dry weather in early May resulted from an anticyclone centred to the northeast and winds from the east and south. Colder, northerly air

dominated after 18th, still dry, but from 25th the pressure declined and fronts from the northwest brought long periods of rain to break the developing drought.





Seabirds, gulls and terns

Pride of place goes to a **Magnificent Frigatebird** *Fregeta magnificens* seen by one lucky observer at Sandwich Bay (Kent) on 21st. Earlier, a **Cory's Shearwater** *Calonectris diomedea* had passed Guernsey (Channel Islands) on 20th April. The expected passage of **Pomarine Skuas** *Stercorarius pomarinus* at Dungeness (Kent) produced a total of 139, of which 133 were between 4th and 13th, with 43 on 11th. **Long-tailed Skuas** *S. longicaudus* appeared at Annan Parfoot (Dumfries & Galloway) on 1st and at Fair Isle (Shetland) early in June. **Mediterranean Gulls** *Larus melanocephalus* included up to seven (on 22nd) at Sandwich Bay. Single **Caspian Terns** *Sterna caspia* were seen at Covehithe (Suffolk) on 10th and Hickling (Norfolk) on 2nd June. A **Gull-billed Tern** *Gelochelidon nilotica* passed Walberswick (Suffolk) on 5th and there were two on Tresco (Scilly) on 16th. Scilly also produced a **Whiskered Tern** *Chlidonias hybridus* on St Mary's on 13th. **White-winged Black Terns** *C. leucopterus* came in at Minsmere (Suffolk) on 19th and Sizewell (Suffolk) on 25th. Passage of **Black Terns** *C. niger* was mostly not exceptional, but some good numbers were reported from the east midlands early in the month, including up to five visible from the BB editorial office. Totally unexpected, however, was a **Sooty Tern** *S. fuscata* which turned up at Ditchford (Northampton) on 29th and was taken into protective custody on 30th. A subsequent appearance on ITV's

'News at Ten' was poor recompense for those who arrived just after the bird had been carried away!

Wetland species

A month after three **Cranes** *Grus grus* had apparently left Norfolk, three flew west near Burton-on-Trent (Stafford) on 30th April and later three appeared on Anglesey (Gwynedd). A **Purple Heron** *Ardea purpurea* at Radipole (Dorset) on 16th was followed by two at Walberswick on 19th and one there on 24th. **Spoonbills** *Platalea leucorodia* were noted in Cornwall, Suffolk, Norfolk and Northumberland. Lynemouth (Tyne & Wear) produced a **White Stork** *Ciconia ciconia* on 13th April. Lundy (Devon) turned up a **Spotted Crake** *Porzana porzana* from 27th to 29th.

Black-winged Stilts *Himantopus himantopus* came to Hickling (Norfolk) for two weeks in midmonth and Steart (Somerset) late in May, then near Southend (Essex) on 8th and 9th June. **Kentish Plovers** *Charadrius alexandrinus* included several inland and up to six at Sandwich Bay. **Temminck's Stints** *Calidris temminckii* also made a strong showing, and **Broad-billed Sandpipers** *Limicola falcinellus*—such a feature of May—occurred at Breydon Water (Norfolk) from 27th to 29th and on the Hayle (Cornwall) from 13th to 15th. Rutland Water (Leicester) hosted a wandering **Long-billed Dowitcher** *Limnodromus scolopaceus* on 4th and 5th. Earlier, 77 **Black-tailed Godwits** *Limosa limosa* appeared briefly at Ditchford on 27th April. Early June on Fair Isle was brightened a little by a **Pectoral Sandpiper** *C. melanotos*.

A major feature of the spring up to 18th was the passage of **Dotterels** *Charadrius morinellus*, with well over 200 reported away from breeding areas, from Sandwich in the south to Cumbria, Merseyside and Gwynedd in the west and as far north as Fair Isle. Up to



60 or even more seem to have passed through Cambridge sites and other concentrations included 22 at Boston Fen (Lincoln), 30-40 in northeast Hampshire, 15 on Anglesey and a dozen each at Berwick Hill (Tyne & Wear) and Bamburgh (Northumberland).

Wildfowl included some lingering **Ring-necked Ducks** *Aythya collaris* and a new one at Breydon Water on 27th, and a **Barrow's Goldeneye** *Bucephala islandica* on Loch Leven (Tayside) on 11th.

Birds of prey

Marsh Harriers *Circus aeruginosus* were unusually widespread in the south and west, with odd ones up to Fair Isle. They were reported at Sandwich Bay on seven dates, with 12 or 15 on 17th, when a **Black Kite** *Milvus migrans* was mobbing a **Rough-legged Buzzard** *Buteo lagopus* at the same place! Between seven and 11 **Marsh Harriers** were in the Dee Estuary area (Cheshire/Merseyside), five at Leighton Moss (Lancashire) and several others in Wales and north-west England. Another **Rough-legged Buzzard** was at Minsmere on 14th and more **Black Kites** included three on Alderney (Channel Islands) on 14th April and singles at Lodmoor (Dorset) on 2nd and Dungeness in late May. **Red-footed Falcons** *Falco vespertinus* also showed up well,



with singles at St Margaret's Bay (Kent) on 3rd, Cley (Norfolk) about 14th, the south Cheviots (Northumberland) on 17th and 18th, Highbridge (Somerset) from 22nd to 24th and Walberswick on 30th. Finally, a **Scops Owl** *Otus scops* tantalised listeners at Dimmer (Hampshire) during the latter half of the month and into June.

Near-passerines and passerines

Hoopoes *Upupa epops* were well scattered and **Golden Orioles** *Oriolus oriolus* appeared from 11th, with up to three at Sandwich Bay,

Dungeness, Lundy and Fair Isle and up to seven in Scilly. A **Rose-coloured Starling** *Sturnus roseus* was at High Wycombe (Buckingham) on 1st. On 7th June, there was a **Bee-eater** *Merops apiaster* at Earsdon (Tyne & Wear). **Wrynecks** *Jynx torquilla* came in in ones and twos at Dungeness, with up to three at Sandwich Bay and six on Fair Isle. **Red-backed Shrikes** *Lanius collurio* were noted on Bardsey Island (Gwynedd), at Sandwich Bay and—up to five—on Fair Isle. A **Woodchat Shrike** *L. senator* was seen near Ipswich (Suffolk) on 3rd June.

Red-rumped Swallows *Hirundo daurica* average two or three a year, but, after one in April, another six turned up between 3rd and 18th—at Red Rocks (Merseyside) and Bardsey Island (both on 3rd), Abberton Reservoir (Essex) from 6th to 11th, Cley on 14th, Bryher and St Mary's (Scilly) on 15th and Porthgwarra (Cornwall) on 18th. **Red-breasted Flycatchers** *Ficedula parva* occurred at Landguard (Suffolk) on 15th and Holme (Norfolk) on 27th. **Tawny Pipits** *Anthus campestris* strutted across Beachy Head (East Sussex) on 4th and Scolt Head (Norfolk) on 11th and **Bluethroats** *Luscinia svecica* were noted at Cley, the Isle of May (Fife) and Fair Isle, where there were up to six. Dungeness had a **Black-eared Wheatear** *Oenanthe hispanica* on 17th. **Short-toed Larks** *Calandrella cinerea* reached Bardsey on 15th and 16th, Fair Isle on 17th and 18th and Foulness (Essex) on 26th. A **Great Reed Warbler** *Acrocephalus arundinaceus* sang at Fleet Pond (Hampshire) for much of the month. Fair Isle produced a **Subalpine Warbler** *Sylvia cantillans* on 16th and there was another on the Isle of May eight or nine days later. Some big numbers of the commoner warblers were also recorded. Bardsey usually has only one or two **Lesser White-throats** *S. curruca* each year, but over 20 came in May; there were 500 **Willow Warblers** *Phylloscopus trochilus* on 4th and 300 on 8th, with 100 **Sedge Warblers** *A. schoenobaenus* and 75 **Whitethroats** *S. communis*. Meanwhile, at Dungeness, there were 1,500 **Willow Warblers** on 7th, with 250 **Blackcaps** *S. atricapilla*, 200 **Whitethroats**, 100 **Garden Warblers** *S. borin*, 80 **Sedge Warblers**, 50 **Redstarts** *Phoenicurus phoenicurus*, 30 **Tree Pipits** *Anthus trivialis*, the amazing total of 20 **Wood Warblers** *P. sibilatrix* and 10 **Pied Flycatchers** *F. hypoleuca*. Rarer warblers included a **Greenish Warbler** *P. trochiloides* on Lundy on 16th and 17th, **Melodious Warblers** *Hippolais polyglotta* at Red Rocks and Dungeness and an **Icterine** *H. icterina* at

Sandwich Bay.

If accepted, a **Penduline Tit** *Remiz pendulinus* at Stodmarsh (Kent) on 18th will be only the third British record. More expected were **Serins** *Serinus serinus* at five widely spread sites from 19th April, but a **Red-throated Pipit** *A. cervinus* at Breydon Water in early June was late. **Ortolan Buntings** *Emberiza hortulana* came in at Dungeness on 5th (four) and 8th (two). Fair Isle had a **Rustic Bunting** *E. rustica* on 25th April and a **Little Bunting** *E. pusilla* on 11th. **Scarlet Rosefinches** *Carpodacus erythrinus* occurred there on 30th and 31st and at Bardsey on 30th. Lastly, from the opposite direction, came a **Slate-coloured Junco** *Junco hyemalis*,

which was caught on a North Sea oil-rig and released at Holme at the end of the month: one more in an increasingly impressive list of rigged rarities!

Latest news

Red-necked Grebes *Podiceps grisegena* at Abberton and Eye Brook Reservoirs (Essex and Leicestershire). At East Tilbury (Essex): **Little Egret** *Egretta garzetta* and **Mediterranean Gull**. **Black Kites** on Sussex Downs near Worthing and in New Forest (Hampshire). **Scarlet Rosefinch** at St Catherine's Point (Isle of Wight) and **Yellow-breasted Bunting** *Emberiza aureola* on Fair Isle.

Review

Eleonora's Falcon: adaptations to prey and habitat in a social raptor. By Hartmut Walter. University of Chicago Press, London & Chicago, 1979. 410 pages; 59 figures and 36 black-and-white photographs. £24.50.

Eleonora's Falcon *Falco eleonorae*—one of the last European bird-species to be discovered by science—was named after a medieval Sardinian princess who passed laws protecting falcons. In several respects, this 300-500g falcon is especially interesting: it nests in colonies on islands around the Mediterranean and Aegean Seas; it breeds in late summer and autumn (later than any other Palearctic bird), and feeds its young from the masses of migrants which cross the sea at this time between Europe and Africa; it has two marked colour phases, light predominating over dark.

Between 1969 and 1977, Hartmut Walter made nine field trips to various breeding places, and one to the wintering range. He did most of his work on two large colonies, but visited many others, and also made an extensive search of the literature. The book contains long sections on behaviour, breeding ecology, hunting techniques, food, migration, evolution and human impact. It is well illustrated, with lots of figures, tables and photographs of the bird and its habitat. The author writes in a fairly leisureed style, infused with enthusiasm, and the result is a book that contains much new and interesting information, yet raises many questions for future, more critical, research.

About 50 breeding colonies are known, though others may yet be discovered; a few colonies known from the last century (such as Gibraltar) have already disappeared, probably due to excessive human predation on the eggs and chicks.

For most of the year, Eleonora's Falcons feed mainly on flying insects, but specialise on birds for rearing their young, during roughly mid August to mid October, when, Walter estimates, they must remove nearly 39 tonnes of migrant birds, or about 1.6 million individuals. From recent estimates of the numbers of songbirds crossing the Mediterranean in autumn, this represents less than 0.05% of the total. The migrants are at maximum risk when over the water, and many individuals are forced down by successive stoops from one falcon after another, until they are caught just above the waves. Among more than 5,000 prey remains, Walter identified about 90 species of birds, but various shrikes and warblers made up the majority.

In later sections of the book, the author draws comparisons with other birds-of-prey, and discusses more general topics, such as dispersion, social behaviour, population regulation and sexual dimorphism. He is on less familiar ground here, and, in my opinion, these sections are less useful than those on Eleonora's Falcon itself. In the piece on sexual dimorphism, almost every conceivable theory is discussed, with insufficient attempt to sift out the relevant from the irrelevant correlates. On the whole, however, in contrast to many bird books published in recent years, this one has something new to say. Its main drawback is its high price.

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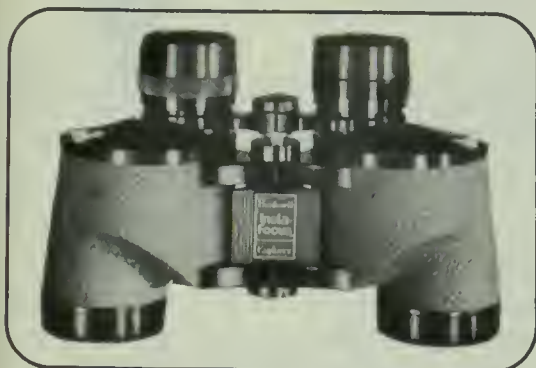
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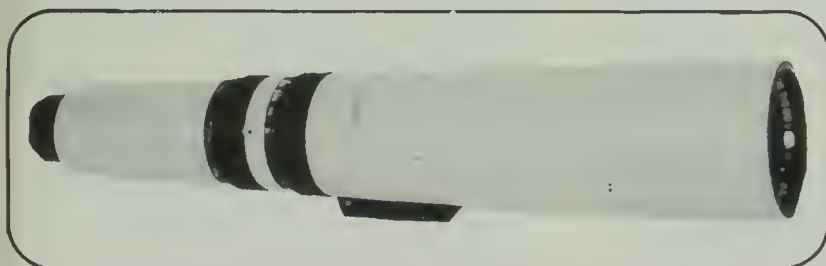
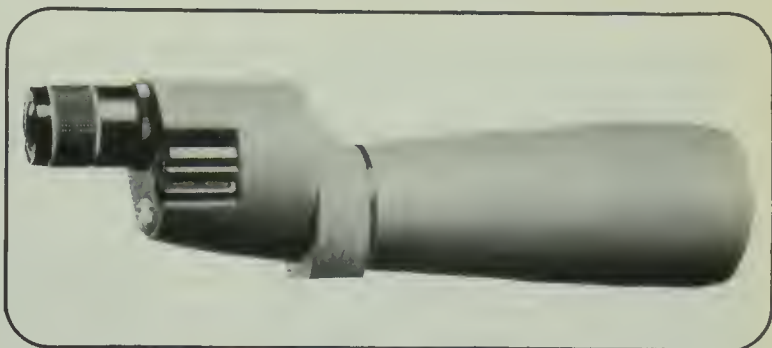
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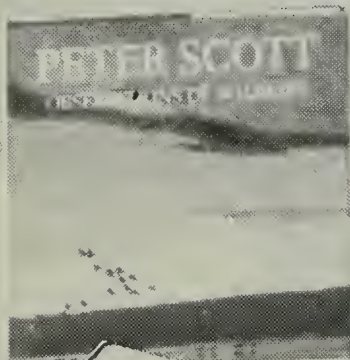
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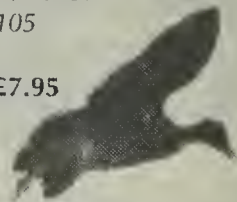
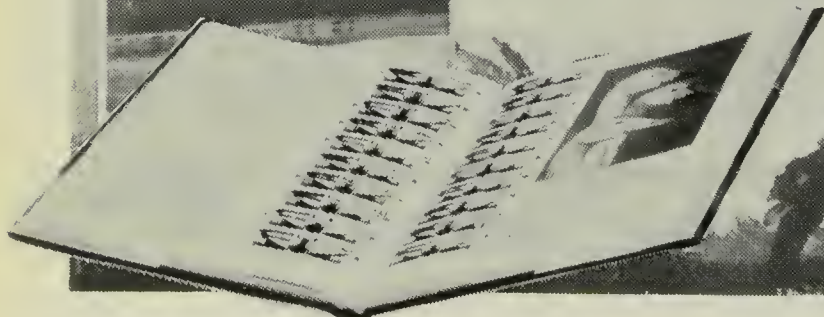
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British Birds

VOLUME 73 NUMBER 9 SEPTEMBER 1980

New photographic consultants

In April, Michael W. Richards took up a new appointment within the RSPB as one of its two film-cameramen. His movie work—including hide-squatting in distant reedbeds at the moment—does not combine well with the paperwork and picture research needed to obtain still photographic prints for *BB*. With regret on both sides, therefore, Mike has resigned as our photographic consultant, although he will continue to join the panel of judges for 'Bird Photograph of the Year' and 'Best recent black-and-white bird-photographs' whenever these events can be slotted into his busy filming schedules.

We are now including many more photographs than in the past (257 in 1979, for instance, compared with only 100 in 1976). We have, therefore, asked two bird-photographers—equally well-known, but in differing fields—to join forces on our behalf as joint photographic consultants: Dr Richard Chandler and Donald A. Smith.



200. Dr Richard Chandler (*Mark Chandler*)

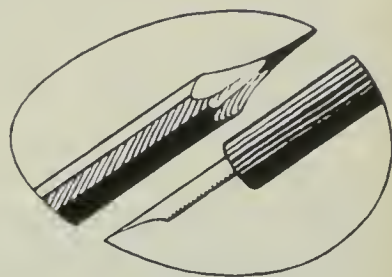


201. Don Smith (*Don Smith*)

Richard Chandler, lecturer in engineering at the Imperial College of Science and Technology and author of recent papers on roosting Pied Wagtails (*Brit. Birds* 72: 299-313) and Red-necked Grebes in winter 1978/79 (*Brit. Birds* in prep.), has provided many interesting, topical photographs for *BB* (in 1979, for instance, these included Mediterranean and Common Gulls, Red-necked Grebe, Little Stint, Snipe and Chiffchaff).

Don Smith, as well as being managing director of a textile business making curtains, is secretary of the influential Association of British Natural History Photographic Societies and a director of the International Federation of Wildlife Photography. In 1979, he was awarded his Fellowship of the Royal Photographic Society for a folio of bird-photographs. He won the award for Bird Photograph of the Year in 1979 after being among the runners-up in both 1977 and 1978. The selection for 'Best recent black-and-white bird-photographs' has included prints by Don in five of the last six years.

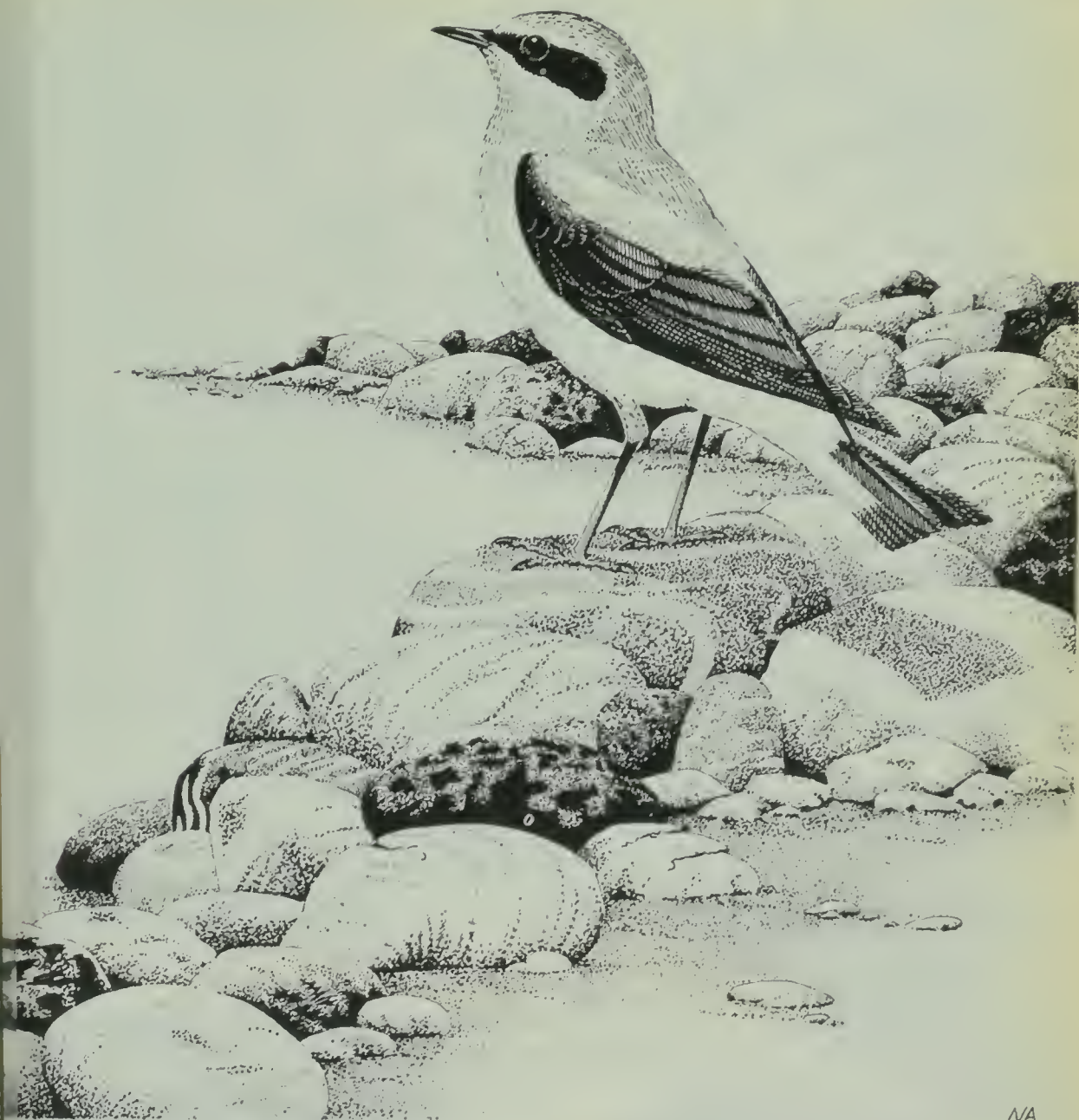
'Bird Illustrator of the Year' and 'The Richard Richardson Award'



For these awards, artists have to submit four drawings, in a range of sizes to reduce to *British Birds*' dimensions. This year, 156 illustrations were sent in by 39 artists. We selected 44 of these, by 23 artists, to be displayed at the press reception and award presentation in London.



Fig. 1. WINNER, BIRD ILLUSTRATOR OF THE YEAR, 1980 Ghostly Gannets *Sula bassana* in mist/rain on dark morning off Islay, July 1979 (Norman Arlott)



NA

2. WINNER, BIRD ILLUSTRATOR OF THE YEAR, 1980 Wheatear *Oenanthe oenanthe*, Islay, August 1979
(Norman Arlott)

The winners were as follows:

BIRD ILLUSTRATOR OF THE YEAR, 1980

1st Norman Arlott (Reading, Berkshire)

2nd Crispin Fisher (Aylesbury, Buckinghamshire)

3rd Alan Harris (Harlow, Essex)

THE RICHARD RICHARDSON AWARD

1st Andrew Stock (Epsom, Surrey)

Although the number of entries was lower than that of last year, the average standard was higher. Deciding on the final placings took us a long time and we became increasingly critical of the minutiae of the artwork of the leading artists. In the end, Norman Arlott, who was unofficial fourth last year, pipped Crispin Fisher for first place. Alan Harris was placed third



Fig. 3. 2ND, BIRD ILLUSTRATOR OF THE YEAR, 1980 Stock Doves *Columba oenas* at edge of Grendon Wood, Buckinghamshire, during 'mini-drought', May 1980 (Crispin Fisher)

for the second year. Rodney Ingram can take heart from being runner-up in fourth place.

Norman Arlott's four drawings were all crisp, clear and technically admirable for reproduction in a journal such as *British Birds*. We thought that one of Crispin Fisher's drawings (Stock Doves, fig. 3) was the best of all, but had reservations about parts of two others. Alan Harris's drawings were technically excellent and beautifully drawn, but he was let down badly by one of his birds which we would have failed to identify without its caption.

We were delighted by the marked increase in the number of entrants under 21 who were eligible for The Richard Richardson Award; and we feel



fig. 4. 3RD, BIRD ILLUSTRATOR OF THE YEAR, 1980 Winter-plumaged Grey Wagtail *Motacilla cinerea* searching for food in leaf debris at edge of slow-moving stream (Alan Harris)

that Richard would have approved of Andrew Stock's lively winning drawing of Starlings quarrelling on a rubbish tip, reproduced on the cover of this issue. A number of illustrations showed birds in man-made or man-influenced settings and this was certainly the most successful of these.

As a result of the Bird Illustrator of the Year competition last year, and the publication of winning entries, a number of commissions from publishers have been received by the artists; this is clearly a very positive additional encouragement to take part in future competitions. Much of the artwork used on the covers and inside *British Birds* during the past year was originally submitted for the 1979 competition, and many examples from this year's will appear in future issues.

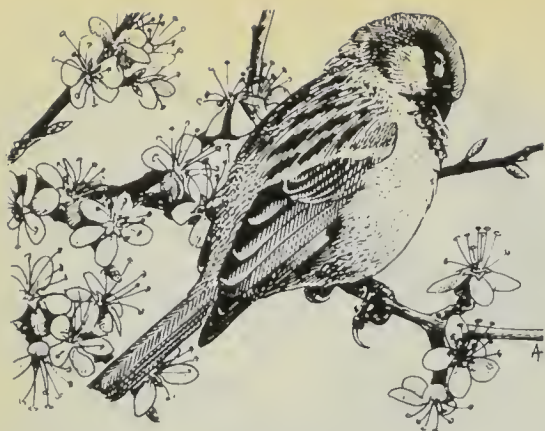


Fig. 5. 3RD, BIRD ILLUSTRATOR OF THE YEAR, 1980 Male House Sparrow *Passer domesticus* preening among blossom of blackthorn *Prunus spinosa* (Alan Harris)

In last year's report we made various comments and criticisms and it seems that many of these have been noted and acted on. Some made then are, however, still relevant and worth repeating. There were drawings which would not have withstood the required reduction, being drawn with such fine lines or with areas of heavy crosshatching that were almost pure tone and which made them quite unsuitable for line reproduction. We again found plenty of examples where the scale of the bird to its surroundings was not given enough thought and usually resulted in the bird appearing far too large. There were other examples where the proportions within the bird itself were poorly considered: wagtails with short tails, birds with legs too short, too long or too thin, and, a common error, heads too large. There were the usual difficulties with beaks and feet referred to in our last report. A particularly tricky thing to draw is the open bill of a bird calling, singing or being aggressive. Some artists apparently forget that it is only the lower mandible which is hinged and movable. We were glad to see far fewer obvious copies from familiar photographs. There was a greater use of original observations and we were pleased to find that a number of artists had recorded details of these on the backs of their drawings. It is helpful to us in handling, and shows off the drawings to better advantage, if artists leave a generous margin around their work (too many were trimmed to the exact dimensions). On the other hand, drawings do not need to be elaborately mounted.

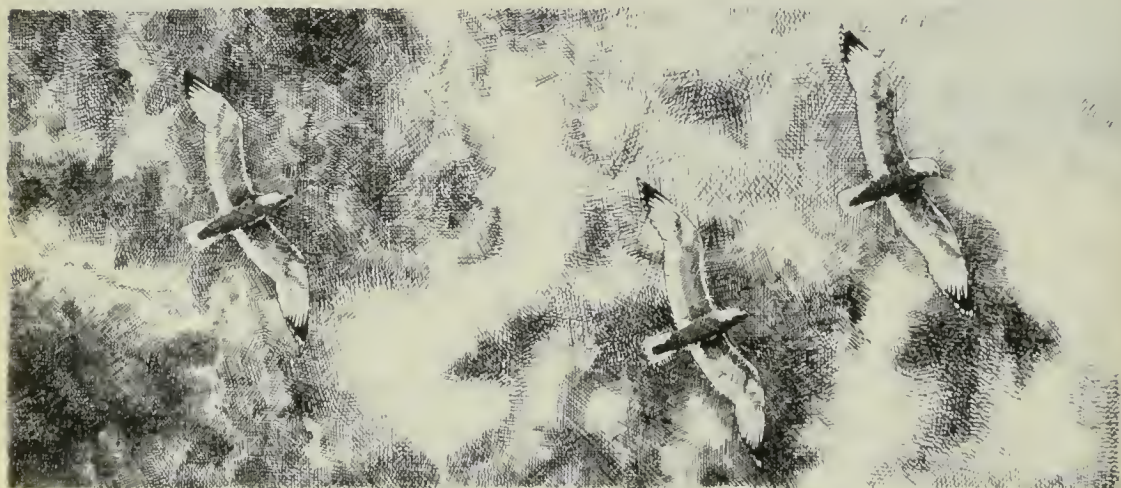


Fig. 6. WINNER, THE RICHARD RICHARDSON AWARD, 1980 Herring Gulls *Larus argentatus*, Pembrokeshire, August 1979 (Andrew Stock)

The high standard of the entries in the first two years has guaranteed the continuation of these two competitions.

ERIC ENNION, ROBERT GILLMOR and J. T. R. SHARROCK

Why does Wilson's Petrel have yellow on the webs of its feet?



Robert M. Zink and Jan L. Eldridge

The function of the yellow webs on the feet of certain petrels of the subfamily Oceanitinae (see plate 202) has not previously been questioned and considered. This is surprising, since one of the three species that possess them—Wilson's Petrel *Oceanites oceanicus*—has been the subject of much study. Two other species in this subfamily also have yellow webs: Elliot's Petrel *Oceanites gracilis* and White-faced Petrel *Pelagodroma marina*.

Species in the Oceanitinae have long slender legs and short webbed toes; typically, they forage using '... a distinctive type of progression, "walking on the water" with spread wings, picking food from the surface as they bounce along, without alighting on the water to feed' (Serventy *et al.* 1971). Referring to Wilson's Petrel, these authors also noted that 'The yellow webs are also often visible when the bird patters along the water with drooped feet in its search for food' and that its '... mode of flight is also rather distinctive—"alternation of gliding and synchronous fluttering" the feet being dangled as the bird skips about picking minutiae from the surface'. This behaviour can be observed in the photographs by Boswall (1979). Numerous authors (e.g. Alexander 1954, Murphy 1936, Palmer 1962, Watson 1975) have described this foraging behaviour, and most casually mention the yellow webs and state that usually they are not visible at sea. Boswall (1979) has further clarified the use of this character as a field mark; the same conclusions were reached by one of us (RMZ), based on field observations of this species in Antarctic waters. Explanations accounting for the peculiar water-treading foraging flights include propulsion (Murphy 1936), stability (Palmer 1962) and wind avoidance due to a relatively calm microenvironment above the water surface (Routh 1949). We can, however, find no reference to the possible adaptive significance of the yellow webs. We suggest that the yellow webs on the feet of the Wilson's Petrel (and possibly those of other species) are used either to attract prey, especially krill *Euphausia*, or to startle them, in either case facilitating their capture by the petrel.

It is possible that the yellow webs function as signals in breeding or species-specific displays. Studies, however, of the breeding biology of

Wilson's Petrel, by Beck and Brown (1972) and by Roberts (1940), have indicated that displays related to pairing and nest relief are primarily vocalisations and mutual preening.

The use of feet to lure or frighten prey has been reported for several aquatic-feeding bird species: 'foot-paddling' by Snowy Egret *Egretta thula*, Green Heron *Butorides striatus* and several gulls and waders (Portielje 1928, Tinbergen 1953, Meyerriechs 1959a & 1959b, Hoyt 1961); 'foot-stirring' by Snowy Egret, Reddish Egret *Dichromanassa rufescens*, Louisiana Heron *Hydranassa tricolor* and Wood Ibis *Mycteria americana* (Baird *et al.* 1884, McIlhenney 1936, Rand 1956, Meyerriechs 1959a); 'foot-trembling' by Killdeer *Charadrius vociferus* (Smith 1970); and 'hover-stirring' by Snowy Egret and Reddish Egret (Baird *et al.* 1884, Bond 1934, Sprunt 1936, Grimes 1936, Meyerriechs 1959a).

Matthews (1951) suggested that in some instances the feet of Wilson's Petrels seemed to be stirring the water. In the Sub-antarctic and Antarctic seas, a primary food of Wilson's Petrel is krill (Watson 1975). The birds forage during both the day and the night, as many observers have noted. All but one genus of krill are bioluminescent and, while the function of the bioluminescence is not fully understood, it may relate to alarm signals or attracting mates (Barnes 1974). It is possible that the yellow webs of the petrel, when dangled in the water, serve either to lure krill (by eliciting a swarming response) or to frighten them, in either instance making them more conspicuous to the petrel. Wilson's Petrels also eat squids (Decapoda), which prey on krill. It is possible, therefore, that the petrel attracts the squid by mimicking the krill and then eats the squid.



202. Feet of Wilson's Petrel *Oceanites oceanicus* (Jan L. Eldridge)

Several experiments could be performed to test our hypothesis. Beck & Brown (1972) noted that Wilson's Petrel would not desert its nest, even when netted and marked. It would be informative to capture adults at nest sites and blacken the webs. Both modified and control adults and young could be captured and weighed subsequently to determine if the blackened webs interfered with foraging success. The response of krill to the yellow webs (or a model) presented by the birds could also be examined experimentally.

Acknowledgments

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Possible future Palearctic passerine vagrants to Britain

D. I. M. Wallace



The crop of extralimital vagrants from the central and eastern Palearctic in the autumns of 1975 and 1976 was extraordinary (*Brit. Birds* 69: 321-368, 70: 405-453). The discovery of such passerines as the Siberian Rubythroat *Luscinia calliope* caused many birdwatchers to extend their sights even farther to the east. So, notwithstanding the return of the Atlantic storm-track to more normal latitudes in 1977 and 1978 and a consequent reduction in eastern rarities (*Brit. Birds* 71: 481-532, 548-550, 72: 503-549), it is timely to consider what other small birds might come our way from Eurasia. In this short paper, therefore, I briefly restate the known European history of extralimital Palearctic vagrants yet to reach Britain and Ireland and examine the potential for vagrancy in other Palearctic passerines yet to reach Europe or Britain but regularly undertaking long-distance migrations.

Approach to this review

Like other observers who make annual contact with rarities, I have long sensed that any irruptive and regular long-distance migrant that is even partly sympatric with those species known to occur may follow them. Thus, the basis of my research has been to search for patterns of breeding distribution, migratory range and distance that match those for known vagrants. To this end, I have drawn most upon Vaurie (1959), Flint *et al.* (1968) and Ali & Ripley (1973) who have provided detailed or visually explicit sources for the migratory birds of the Palearctic fauna. For some

species, the clues can be obvious. For the migrant populations of south-western Asia, however, they are not so and I have been forced to list a few more species than those with existing European records. I have considered—but firmly excluded—all species of the Himalayan faunal type. Evidence exists for westward vagrancy by altitudinal migrants in Europe, but it is unconvincing for those of the high mountains of central Asia. Finally, I have not been tempted to look towards North Africa, in spite of two recent British Trumpeter Finches *Erythropsiza githaginea* and regular Maltese records of other desert species, such as Hoopoe Lark *Alaemon alaudipes*. The product of my research is now presented under three geographical headings.

Possible vagrants from Europe

If Pine Grosbeaks *Pinicola enucleator* and the nominate northern race of the Treecreeper *Certhia familiaris* occasionally reach Britain from Scandinavia, three other species of the Siberian faunal type that periodically irrupt from the taiga may also do so. The often confiding Siberian Jay *Perisoreus infaustus* breeds as close as south-central Norway and individuals from more eastern populations reach Czechoslovakia, having wandered at least 800 km south from their normal range. The Siberian Tit *Parus cinctus* also breeds in south-central Norway, and wanderers from western Russia reach Moscow. (This large, somewhat dusty tit has already been reported in Britain, but not in circumstances that allowed acceptance by the national authorities.) The last of the trio is the entrancing Azure Tit *P. cyaneus*. In the 19th century, it irrupted west to Scandinavia, Germany and even the Netherlands, but the last of several Austrian records was in 1963. Recently, however, it has been reported breeding in Finland and northern Norway and, if such an extension of range is held, its tendency to westward vagrancy could bring it to Britain.

If Red-rumped Swallows *Hirundo daurica* increasingly overshoot their normal range and annually reach England, two other species from the western Mediterranean avifauna may do so. The Crag Martin *Ptyonoprogne rupestris* now breeds within 650 km of the south coast of England and, since it has previously reached the Canary Islands, the English Channel should not deter it. The Spotless Starling *Sturnus unicolor* may appear to be locked in by the Pyrénées, but, in fact, most of the Spanish population of this black bird is migratory. From origins in the western Mediterranean, vagrants have reached Corfu, southern and central France and, once, Tenerife. (It should not be forgotten that several apparently spotless starlings have occurred on the Isles of Scilly in recent autumns. All have looked quite out of place among their fully moulted and heavily spotted companions; one was rather large and showed purple iridescence!)

Finally in this group, if Rüppell's Warbler *Sylvia rueppelli* has broken all prior rules and reached Britain twice since 1978, then three other species of the Mediterranean or closely allied faunal types but with a similar eastern bias to their normal distribution must not be ignored. The nimble Masked Shrike *Lanius nubicus* breeds as close as Greece and has overshot westward to France and Spain. Before the fall of the Hastings rarities (Nicholson &

Ferguson-Lees 1962), this species was on the British list. The hulking Olive-tree Warbler *Hippolais olivetorum* breeds as close as southern Yugoslavia and has wandered west to Italy and Algeria. Lastly, the Semi-collared Flycatcher *Ficedula semitorquata*, which has recently been given specific status breeds as close as Greece.

Possible vagrants from southwestern Asia

Deducing what species may yet come from the nearer southern latitudes of Asia is not easy. In terms of species that clearly point the way, only Cretzschmar's Bunting *Emberiza caesia* and Paddyfield Warbler *Acrocephalus agricola* stand out (but both also breed in eastern Europe). There is, however, growing evidence of the occasional arrival in England of Black Redstarts *Phoenicurus ochruros* of an eastern race (probably *phoenicuroides*) and of Yellow-browed Warblers *Phylloscopus inornatus* of the southern race *humei*, which is partly sympatric with Pallas's Warbler *P. proregulus*. Against this backcloth, it is reasonable to expect three more members of the Muscicapidae which belong to the Turkestanian faunal type. The first is the superb White-throated Robin *Irania gutturalis*. It breeds no closer than western Turkey, but one reached Sweden in 1977. The second is the tricky Ménétries's Warbler *Sylvia mystacea* which, though breeding no closer than Turkey and southeast Russia, wandered to Portugal in 1967. The last is the Green Warbler *Phylloscopus nitidus* which breeds no closer than the Caucasus, yet has wandered southwest to the Crimea, and reached Heligoland in October 1867.

In addition to the three species discussed above, one more latecomer to Europe cannot be ignored and prompts a slightly wider canvass. It is the large, dull Long-billed Pipit *Anthus similis*, which breeds no closer than Lebanon, and undertakes limited and mainly altitudinal migrations; yet one was claimed in Norway in 1978. This individual, more than any other, underlines the fact that even relatively sedentary species may occasionally perform an astonishing act of vagrancy. Accordingly, two buntings may yet surprise British observers. These are the Cinereous *Emberiza cineracea* which breeds in the Greek Islands and accompanies the Ortolan *E. hortulana* on migration, and the Grey-necked *E. buchanani* which regularly strays to

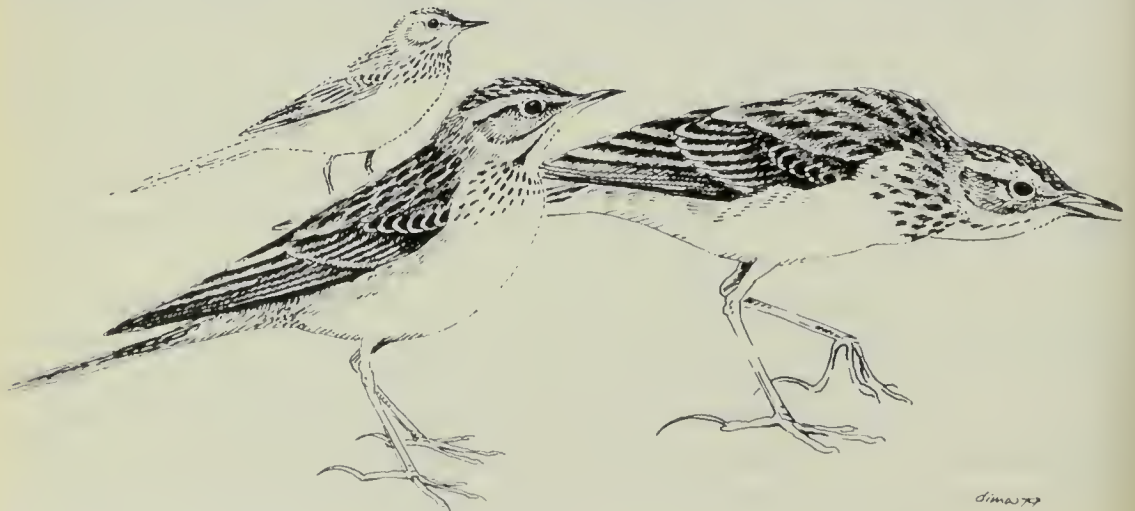


Fig. 1. Blyth's *Anthus godlewskii* (left), Richard's *A. novaeseelandiae* (right) and immature Tawny Pits *A. campestris* (rear) (D. I. M. Wallace)



Fig. 2. Red-breasted *Ficedula parva* (left), Grey-streaked *Muscicapa griseisticta* (front) and Pied Flycatchers *F. hypoleuca* (flying) (D. I. M. Wallace)

southeast Russia and has been seen among the spring passages of Black-headed *E. melanocephala*. Finally the Black Lark *Melanocorypha yeltoniensis* may appear. Partly sympatric with its two congeners Calandra Lark *M. calandra* and Bimaculated Lark *M. bimaculata*, it regularly moves west to the Crimea and has reached two of the Low Countries and Heligoland.

Possible vagrants from central Asia and Siberia

Given the annual evidence of scores of Yellow-browed Warblers (of the northern, nominate race *inornatus*) and Richard's Pipits *Anthus novaeseelandiae* (and, hot on the heels of Siberian Rubythroats, the recent and astonishing Pallas's Reed Bunting *Emberiza pallasi*) the regularity and diversity of westward vagrancy or reversed migration of passerine summer visitors to central and northern Asia is fully established. An analysis of the overlay of the breeding ranges of all such species points to the possibility of a further 25 appearing, all but one from a region bounded by the latitudes 50 to 60°N and the longitudes 75 to 110°E. This area contains the headwaters of several river systems, notably the Ob, Yenisei and Lena, and Lake Baikal, and is flanked to the south by the Altai mountains and the Yoblonovy Khvobet uplands: well within the breeding ranges of many passerine vagrants now observed annually in Britain, including, for



Fig. 3. Brown Shrike *Lanius cristatus* (D. I. M. Wallace)

example, the distinctive Radde's Warbler *Phylloscopus schwarzi*. Of these 25 species, 14 have penetrated Continental Europe, nine have reached the western fringe, and six have been reported in Britain.

The first of the 13 species recorded in Europe is the notorious Blyth's Pipit *A. godlewskii*, of which one specimen was taken in England in October 1882 and another reached Finland in 1975. (Closely allied to both the Richard's Pipit and the Tawny Pipit *A. campestris* and favouring similar habitat, it is unlikely that the last has been heard of this potentially most troublesome bird.) Next come the dark-faced, ground-hugging Siberian Accentor *Prunella montanella*, which wandered formerly to Greece, Czechoslovakia and Italy and reached Sweden in October 1976, the hulking Gray's Grasshopper Warbler *Locustella fasciolata*, which has turned up in western France and Denmark, and the Eastern Crowned Leaf Warbler *Phylloscopus coronatus*, which, although breeding no closer than Manchuria, appeared on Heligoland in October 1843. After these, there is the chief ornithological prize of the Channel Isles (so far): the Siberian Blue Robin *Luscinia cyane*. This beautiful chat appeared on Sark in October 1975. Then there are two wood-loving flycatchers, the Narcissus *Ficedula narcissina*, which, although severely tainted with the likelihood of escape, remains on the national list of France, and the Brown *Muscicapa latirostris*, of which apparently wild individuals have reached Norway and the Faeroe Islands, and at least two have been reported in Britain and Ireland (but none accepted). Six finches and buntings have also appeared: the Oriental Greenfinch *Carduelis sinica* in Denmark and Germany, the tree- and bush-haunting Pallas's Rosefinch *Carpodacus roseus* in western Russia and Hungary, the bush-loving Meadow Bunting *Emberiza cioides* in Italy, the willow-inhabiting Yellow-browed Bunting *E. chrysophrys* in Belgium and France, the bush-and-reed-haunting Chestnut Bunting *E. rutila* in Norway, Scotland, the Netherlands and France, and the damp ground-liking Black-faced Bunting *E. spodocephala* on Heligoland. (So far none of the British records of the above species has received lasting acceptance, but Blyth's Pipit will be placed shortly in Category B of the British list.) Finally, there is the Daurian Jackdaw *Corvus dauuricus* which has wandered to Finland.

Of the 25 species, 11 are left for account. They are the Brown Shrike *Lanius cristatus*, three wood-loving flycatchers, namely the Mugimaki *F. mugimaki*, the Sooty or Dark-sided *M. sibirica* and the Grey-streaked *M. griseisticta*, two thicket-liking redstarts, namely the Eversmann's *Phoenicurus*

Fig. 4. Eastern Crowned Leaf Warbler
Phylloscopus coronatus (D. I. M. Wallace)



erythronotus, which strays to Asia Minor, and the Daurian *P. aureus*, the skulking Whistling Nightingale *Luscinia sibilans*, two forest-haunting thrushes, namely the Pale *Turdus pallidus* and the Grey-backed *T. hortulorum*, yet another Hastings rarity in the form of the delightful bush-loving Long-tailed Rosefinch *Uragus sibiricus*, and, finally, the open country Daurian or Purple-backed Starling *Sturnus sturninus*. Again, all of these are partly sympatric with species already recorded in Europe and they regularly perform lengthy migrations normally oriented south or southeast.

Identification problems of possible vagrants

The identification criteria of most species likely to come from Europe and southern Asia have been better covered by the field guides of recent years, notably in Heinzel *et al.* (1972). But, for most birdwatchers, adequate texts and illustrations of the northern Asian birds will be hard to come by. Accordingly I have prepared an appendix which points to the likely confusion species, picks out the crucial field characters and lists the most useful references currently available. I must stress, however, the danger of such a condensed treatment. The invitation that it offers to a leaped conclusion must be refused!

Summary and conclusions

Whether through unusual migratory factors or increased searching, the observed numbers of extralimital vagrant passerines from Eurasia have increased in recent years; in Britain, the autumns of 1975 and 1976 were particularly productive. Research into the records of irruptive migrants within Europe, and of vagrants from Asia known to have reached Continental Europe, coupled with an analysis of the distribution and migrations of species wholly or partly sympatric with established vagrants, indicates that a further 38 passerine species may yet reach Britain. A key to assist the identification of those which are least known is given.

It should be noted that escape caveats attach to most of the species listed, but, for the purpose of this review, I have excluded only two species in the international record. These are the still hopelessly clouded Red-headed Bunting *Emberiza bruniceps* and the Tickell's Thrush *Turdus unicolor*, whose arrival on Heligoland from the Himalayas remains the most incomprehensible of all vagrancies.

Acknowledgments

For up-to-date news, I am indebted to L. Svensson, V. Ree and, particularly, R. J. Johns.

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No attempt has been made to check the credentials of every past vagrant; effectively, I have accepted the majority views of earlier authors, of which the most important are:

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Appendix 1. Key to the identification of 25 potential vagrants from Asia

Subject species	Confusion species	Diagnostic characters	References
Blyth's Pipit <i>Anthus godlewskii</i>	Northern race of Richard's Pipit <i>A. novaeseelandiae</i> , immature Tawny Pipit <i>A. campestris</i>	Less long and bulky, shorter- and thinner-legged than Richard's, with much shorter hindclaw; plumage and voice intermediate between Richard's and immature Tawny, but underparts less uniform, with flanks and undertail-coverts orange; nape often palc; skin reference essential	Svensson (1975), Williamson (1977), Kitson (1979)
Whistling Nightingale <i>Luscinia sibilans</i>	Thrush Nightingale <i>L. luscinia</i>	Close in size to Robin <i>Erithacus rubecula</i> ; shares mottled chest of Thrush Nightingale, but plumage less grey, shorter-tailed than other nightingales, skin reference essential	King <i>et al.</i> (1975)

Siberian Blue Robin <i>L. cyane</i>	Female and immature Red-flanked Bluetail <i>Tarsiger cyanurus</i> ; escaped Indian Blue Robin <i>L. brunnea</i>	Longer-legged but shorter-tailed than Robin; male slaty-blue above, snow-white below, with black face mask; female and immature olive-brown above (often tinged blue in former), white below, but with buff or olive mottling on breast and flanks, and prominent eye-ring	Rountree (1977)
Eversmann's Redstart <i>Phoenicurus erythronotus</i>	Eastern races of Redstart <i>P. phoenicurus</i>	Longer than Redstart (by 2 cm); flicks rather than quivers tail; male wholly rufous below and on back, with white patch on outer wing, female and immature greyish-brown, not pale buff, below; skin reference essential	Heinzel <i>et al.</i> (1972)
Daurian Redstart <i>P. aureus</i>	Eastern races of Black Redstart <i>P. ochruros</i>	Male shows similar plumage pattern to <i>P. o. phoenicuroides</i> , but huge grey-white head and shawl and solid white patch on secondaries instantly obvious, female and immature show similar mark on wings, prominent pale eye-rings and rufous-buff under tail	Heinzel <i>et al.</i> (1972), King <i>et al.</i> (1975)
Grey-backed Thrush <i>Turdus hortulorum</i>	Eye-browed Thrush <i>T. obscurus</i> , Pale Thrush <i>T. pallidus</i>	Size between Eye-browed and Pale; male has head, upperparts and breast grey and flanks rich chestnut (not peach or brown); female and immature more olive above, with breast mottled dark and flanks duller; lacks supercilium of Eye-browed and white tail corners of Pale	King <i>et al.</i> (1975)
Pale Thrush <i>Turdus pallidus</i>	Eye-browed Thrush	Larger than Eye-browed; shares white belly and vent of Eye-browed, but flanks brown, not peach; grey head lacks pale supercilium; skin reference recommended	King <i>et al.</i> (1975)
Gray's Grass-hopper Warbler <i>Locustella fasciolata</i>	Large <i>Acrocephalus</i> warblers	Recalls Savi's Warbler <i>L. luscinoides</i> , but larger, with noticeably longer bill and tail, shares orange under-tail	Williamson (1960), Svensson (1975), Hayman, in Gooders (1978)
Ménétries's Warbler <i>Sylvia mystacea</i>	Sardinian Warbler <i>S. melanocephala</i>	Male resembles Sardinian above (though black head more contrasting and tertials fringed brown) and Subalpine Warbler <i>S. cantillans</i> below; female and immature paler, sandier than Sardinian	Williamson (1964), Svensson (1975)
Eastern Crowned Leaf Warbler <i>Phylloscopus coronatus</i>	Yellow-browed Warbler <i>P. inornatus</i>	Larger and longer-billed than Chiffchaff <i>P. collybita</i> ; broad dusky stripes on sides of crown contrast with pale yellow supercilium; wing-bars much less distinct than on Yellow-browed, with only lower one obvious; orange base to lower mandible distinctive; underwing and vent bright yellow	Williamson (1962), Ali & Ripley (1973)

Sooty Flycatcher <i>Muscicapa sibirica</i>	Spotted Flycatcher <i>M. striata</i> , next two congeners	Smaller than Spotted and sootier above; underparts broadly marked, appearing almost wholly grey-brown except for almost white central division of softly streaked underparts; buff-white bar across greater coverts more obvious than faint bar of Spotted	King <i>et al.</i> (1975)
Grey-streaked Flycatcher <i>M. griseisticta</i>	Sooty and Spotted Flycatchers	Slightly smaller than Spotted, but larger than Sooty, paler above than Sooty and distinctly and uniformly streaked dark grey below, wing-bar dull white and indistinct, but narrow white band over bill and spot over lores combine in conspicuous pale patch before eye	King <i>et al.</i> (1975)
Brown Flycatcher <i>M. latirostris</i>	Sooty and Spotted Flycatchers	Much smaller than congeners, with proportionately longer wings but shorter tail than Red-breasted <i>Ficedula parva</i> ; very broad bill shows yellow base to lower mandible; plumage less patterned than congeners, grey-brown above and white below, with light brown wash over breast and flanks; lacks wing-bar but white eye-ring conspicuous (though such mark also shown by Sooty and Grey-streaked)	Witherby <i>et al.</i> (1938), King <i>et al.</i> (1975)
Mugimaki Flycatcher <i>Ficedula mugimaki</i>	Female and immature Red-breasted Flycatcher, Narcissus Flycatcher <i>F. narcissina</i> and Brown Flycatcher in brief view	Close in size to Red-breasted, smaller than Narcissus; male black above, with supercilium, panel on inner wing, and small patches at base of tail white, and fore underparts orange, contrasting with white vent; female and immature recall Red-breasted, but combination of one or two pale buff wing-bars and dull brown tail diagnostic; skin reference recommended	King <i>et al.</i> (1975)
Narcissus Flycatcher <i>F. narcissina</i>	Immature Red-breasted Flycatcher (and beware escapes of Narcissus and of closely allied Yellow-rumped Flycatcher <i>F. zanthopygia</i>)	Male mostly black, with yellow supercilium, rump and underparts and white patch on greater coverts; female and immature recall Red-breasted Flycatcher, but show olive-brown on breast and flanks, and lack white patches at base of dull brown tail; bill large	King <i>et al.</i> (1975)
Brown Shrike <i>Lanius cristatus</i>	Isabelline Shrike <i>L. isabellinus</i> , female and immature Red-backed Shrike <i>L. collurio</i>	Recalls Isabelline, but large-billed, large-headed, brown (not greyish or sandy) above and more rufous-buff below, lacks white patch at base of primaries; skin reference essential	King <i>et al.</i> (1975)
Daurian Jackdaw <i>Corvus dauuricus</i>	Jackdaw <i>C. monedula</i>	White neck-collar and (on most) underbody	Hayman, in Gooders (1978)

Daurian Starling <i>Sturnus sturninus</i>	None (but beware escapes of other Asian congeners)	Smaller than Starling <i>S. vulgaris</i> ; pale and buff-grey head and body of adult contrasts with dull purple back; wings and tail sheeny green-black, former with bold off-white bar across central coverts, white tips to greater coverts and white bases to outer flight feathers; underwing conspicuously white; often with pale patch on rump; immature duller, lacking white bases to primaries	King <i>et al.</i> (1975)
Oriental Greenfinch• <i>Carduelis sinica</i>	Greenfinch <i>C. chloris</i>	Body plumage distinctly brown and whole appearance less uniform than Greenfinch; head mainly grey, belly centre and vent white	King <i>et al.</i> (1975)
Pallas's Rosefinch <i>Carpodacus roseus</i>	Female and immature Scarlet Rosefinch <i>C. erythrinus</i> (and other escaped congeners)	Longer-tailed than Scarlet; male drenched in pink (not red), with silvery-white crown and throat and white wing-bars; female and immature less olive than Scarlet, more streaked and with pink tone obvious on rump (and even on face)	Heinzel <i>et al.</i> (1972)
Long-tailed Rosefinch <i>Uragus sibiricus</i>	None (generically distinct from <i>Carpodacus</i>)	General structure, extraordinarily long tail and pale pink plumage strongly recall Long-tailed Tit <i>Aegithalos caudatus</i> ; double wing-bar prominent	Flint <i>et al.</i> (1968)
Black-faced Bunting <i>Emberiza spodocephala</i>	Female and immature Chestnut Bunting <i>E. rutila</i>	Male shows blackish surround to bill on grey-green head, shares pale yellow underparts with female and immature; at all ages, lacks rufous rump of Chestnut and shows bright white sides to tail	King <i>et al.</i> (1975)
Meadow Bunting <i>E. cioides</i>	Female and immature Rock Bunting <i>E. cia</i>	Recalls Rock, but both sexes at all ages show brown (not grey) cheeks contrasting with white supercilium and throat; broad chestnut band across breast	King <i>et al.</i> (1975)
Yellow-browed Bunting <i>E. chrysophrys</i>	Little Bunting <i>E. pusilla</i>	Larger-headed than Little, with sparrow-like bill; supercilium yellow or yellow-buff; white spot on rear cheeks	King <i>et al.</i> (1975)
Chestnut Bunting <i>E. rutila</i>	Female and immature Black-faced Bunting	Larger than Little (especially about head), but slightly smaller than Black-faced; male has chestnut foreparts and rump and bright yellow belly; female and immature duller, streaked but also showing chestnut rump and strongly yellow underparts; tail lacks white sides	King <i>et al.</i> (1975)

Further notes from Mongolia

Alan R. Kitson



Following a British Council award to study birds in Mongolia in 1977 (Kitson 1978), I was granted a second such award in 1979. On this visit, I spent seven weeks in Mongolia (23rd July to 10th September), four of them on an expedition to the Great Lakes Basin in the west. This paper describes three east Palearctic species which are vagrants in Britain, and follows on from those published earlier (*Brit. Birds* 71: 558-562; 72: 5-9, 94-100).

Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler *Locustella certhiola*



203 & 204. Adult Pallas's Grasshopper Warblers *Locustella certhiola* (note heavily worn tails), Mongolia, July 1979 (Alan R. Kitson)

In Mongolia, this species occurs in lakeside reeds *Phragmites* and rushes *Juncus* and in riparian willows *Salix*. I saw nine in spring 1977 and 33 in summer 1979. Although current texts generally draw a comparison between Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler and Sedge Warbler *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus*, they fail to emphasise the supercilia as a common feature. The supercilium of Pallas's Grasshopper is buffy-white, fairly broad and blunt-ended and extends from the bill to the hind crown; it is very nearly as conspicuous as that of Sedge Warbler. On this point, Pallas's Grasshopper might be confused with Sedge, but not with Grasshopper Warbler *L. naevia* or Lanceolated Warbler *L. lanceolata*.

The small pale tips on the upperside of the tail proved most difficult to detect, even in flight, but occasionally, when viewed from below, round white tips were obvious, putting me in mind of Rufous Bush Robin *Cercotrichas galactotes*.

Paddyfield Warbler *Acrocephalus agricola*



205-208. Adult (top left) and juvenile Paddyfield Warblers *Acrocephalus agricola*, Mongolia, August 1979 (Alan R. Kitson)

In Mongolia, this species breeds in reedbeds. Between 25th July and 13th August, I saw about 70; there were two plumage types, which I believe refer to adults and birds of the year. The two types differed principally in the colour of their upperparts. The more numerous type had the mantle pale sandy-brown; the centre of the crown was similarly pale, which, at times of

close viewing, made the darker brown lateral stripes quite noticeable; the bill was shortish, similar to Sedge Warbler; and the general appearance was neat and clean. The second type had darker upperparts, more rufous-brown, similar to Reed Warbler *A. scirpaceus*; the crown was particularly dark and the lateral stripes were difficult to detect; dishevelled plumage on the head and nape gave an unclean appearance; the tail was worn; and the bill seemed longer than on the first type, presumably because the forehead feathers were reduced or missing (Reed Warblers in head moult can appear to have longer-than-usual bills: T. Parmenter *in litt.*). I deduced that the first type (plates 206-208) were juveniles/first-winters, and the second type (plate 205) were adults in moult. This interpretation fits Williamson's (1968) text: young of the year in August have upperparts 'a paler brownish-olive than the adults', the latter then being in a 'reddish-brown' plumage. I did not, however, detect any olive coloration on the young that I saw, their mantles being sandy-brown, precisely the colour shown in the published photograph of the Paddyfield Warbler in Cleveland (*Brit. Birds* 72: plate 195).

Pallas's Reed Bunting *Emberiza pallasii*



209. Pallas's Reed Bunting *Emberiza pallasii* (probably juvenile rather than adult female), Mongolia, August 1979 (Alan R. Kitson)

During August 1979, I saw 51 Pallas's Reed Buntings, mostly in family groups. Although Pallas's Reed may occur at the same site as Reed Bunting *E. schoeniclus*, the two species occupy mutually exclusive habitats, the former breeding in the tall coarse grass *Achanantherum splendens* which grows on dry ground around most of the lakes in the Great Lakes Basin, the latter breeding over water in reeds.

My previous note on this species (*Brit. Birds* 72: 98-100) dealt with adults in winter, spring and summer plumages. The following notes describe adults and juveniles in August:

ADULT MALE In early August, still in 'full breeding' plumage described earlier (*Brit. Birds* 72: 98-100), having pied appearance, grey-white rump and lacking yellow on nape. During the month, came into moult and, by end of the month, adult males had lost much of their black and white contrast, with brown winter plumage now showing on head and mantle, and rump becoming dingier. Two wing-bars on Pallas's distinguish it from Reed: whitish tips to median coverts, buff-

white tips to greater coverts.

ADULT FEMALE (see fig. 1) As described previously, paler and buffier than female Reed Bunting, with pale buff rump, latter sometimes obscured in moult. Contrary to an earlier statement by me, dark (black-brown) spot in lower rear corner of cheek patch (fig. 1) always present, and is diagnostic when compared with head patterns of Reed and Little Buntings *E. pusilla*. Wing-coverts differed from my previous description:

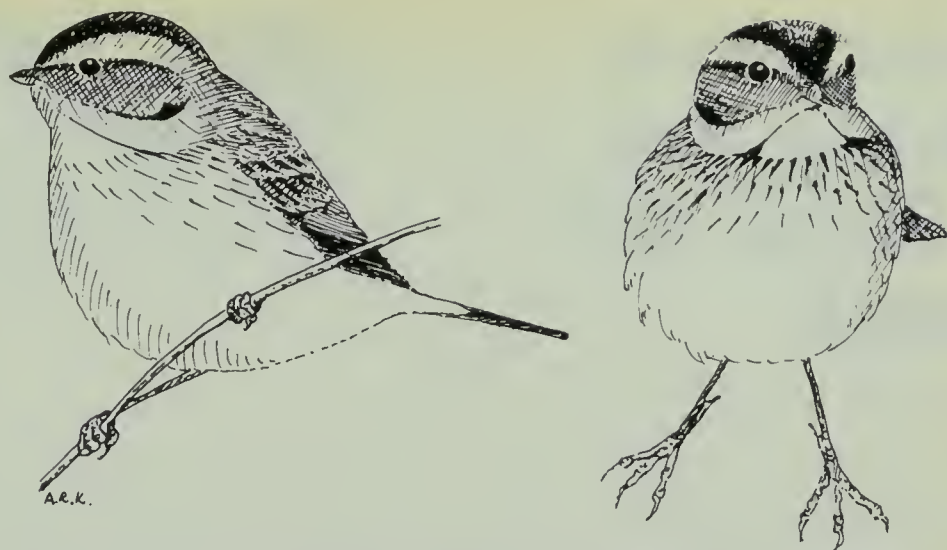


Fig. 1. Adult female (left) and juvenile Pallas's Reed Buntings *Emberiza pallasi*, Mongolia, August 1979 (Alan R. Kitson)

medians tipped whitish or white-buff and greater tips buff, forming two wing-bars, a further distinction from Reed. Lesser coverts difficult to see in field, usually cloaked by mantle or breast feathers, leaving precise colour in doubt; previously, I described them as 'chestnut', but this time considered them to be warm-brown. Warm-buff or chestnut edgings to tertials and secondaries. Moustaches not always angled across breast.

JUVENILE (see fig. 1) Individuals judged to be this age were similar to adult females in

having dark spot in lower rear corner of cheek patch, whitish tips to median coverts and pale buff tips to greater coverts. They differed chiefly in being more heavily streaked, with blackish both above and below. Breast streaking usually well developed in a band and continuing onto flanks. As a rule, streaks finer and wider spaced than those on Reed Bunting. Centre of crown paler than sides. Chestnut edges to tertials and secondaries forming bright panel in closed wing. Rump buffy, often not conspicuously pale.

Acknowledgments

Once again, I am indebted to the British Council in London and the British Embassy in Ulan Bator for making the trip possible. I thank T. Parmenter for processing photographs and M. J. Helps and B. A. E. Marr for lending me equipment.

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Fifty years ago . . .

'A single nest was found by watching . . . The rest were discovered by systematic quartering of the likely ground. In three cases the bird flushed . . . In another case the bird was observed on its eggs about a yard away. It sat motionless, refusing to move when gently flicked with a stick and finally had to be lifted off the eggs. . . we beat over many suitable spots as opportunity offered with the greatest care, but could not discover sitting birds. . . If they do not flush one's chances of getting eggs are extremely slight. The three sets obtained by jumping the birds at some distance were, to my mind, flukes.' (*Brit. Birds* 24: 91, September 1930)

Pallas's Reed Bunting: new to Britain and Ireland



Roger A. Broad and W. E. Oddie

At about midday on 29th September 1976, near Skerryholm on Fair Isle, Shetland, RAB glimpsed a small, dull-coloured passerine as it flew low, from the weedy margin of a narrow potato crop, some 15-20m before diving back in again. It was followed and the whole performance was repeated several times without any satisfactory views being obtained of the skulking bird. Eventually, it was seen at the junction of the crop and the adjacent bare ground, at approximately 15m range, as it crept mouse-like through the vegetation. It was striking for its total lack of noteworthy features. During the next 15 to 20 minutes, it was observed briefly in flight and occasionally on the ground, where it invariably kept well concealed in the vegetation. Once, it was seen side by side with a Twite *Carduelis flavirostris*, which appeared to be almost identical in size. The initial impression was of a small, nondescript, totally unfamiliar bunting (Emberizidae). At close range, it appeared to have a bill typical of that group and it occasionally flicked its tail in a bunting-like fashion, showing a little white in the outer feathers. It lacked, however, any obvious head pattern, and the upperparts seemed to be relatively uniform dark brown, although it showed some streaking on the mantle. Owing to the bird's skulking nature, its underparts were poorly seen, but the impression was of greyish uniformity. Twice, two small, dark triangular smudges were seen on the sides of the lower throat or upper breast. No wing bars or panels showed on the closed wing or in flight. The bird was once heard to give a single unfamiliar call, which at the time was not written down.

This combination of characters was puzzling; the bird was apparently a bunting, but RAB was unaware of any Palearctic bunting as small as a Twite, with the exception of Little Bunting *Emberiza pusilla*, which it clearly did not fit. At this stage, the possibility of its belonging to the New World sparrows was also considered, but lack of experience of this group prevented any further thoughts on its identity without a literature search.

Fortunately, while RAB still had the bird under surveillance, J. Watt arrived and, during the next 15 to 20 minutes, he was independently able to confirm all the points previously noted, although the bird continued to give only frustrating, fleeting glimpses. Having resigned themselves to the fact that, in the circumstances, they were unlikely to add anything further to their observations, they decided to enlist the help of other observers on the island and then return as soon as possible to attempt to catch the bird. It seemed particularly loathe to leave the area or even to come out into the

open, and they were satisfied that there was little likelihood of its moving to a different area. RAB returned to the Observatory, where he described what he had seen, and the bird became the topic of discussion over lunch. A brief search of the literature quickly eliminated the possibility of its being an American sparrow, since none was sufficiently small and drab. The possibility of its being an escaped cage bird was also considered, but again, in the light of the nondescript plumage, this too seemed unlikely.

After lunch, RAB and JW returned to Skerryholm with A. R. Lowe and several others and thoroughly searched the area, but without success. During the next few days, there were no further sightings and hope of satisfactorily identifying the bird faded: the views and notes obtained had been brief and frustrating and, so it seemed, inadequate. Despite many observers searching the area daily, the bird remained undetected until 5th October, when S. D. Cook, ARL and WEO had fleeting glimpses of a small bunting in a large and dense crop of rape at Taing. Their observations confirmed all the characters previously noted and they were able on one occasion to make direct comparison with a nearby Reed Bunting *E. schoeniclus*, which was noticeably larger. That evening, ARL and WEO applied themselves afresh to considering the possible identity of the bird. Nearctic sparrows were again considered. WEO was familiar with the only member of this group to show white in the outer tail feathers, Vesper Sparrow *Poecetes gramineus*, but this was quickly eliminated on size and plumage. They decided to work on the theory that the bunting was of Siberian origin and consequently sifted their way through Dementiev & Gladkov (1954). The illustrations are poorly reproduced in the translation available and they were forced to examine painstakingly the rather verbose descriptions. Most species were eliminated on size alone and the comment 'lacks moustachial stripes' drew attention to Pallas's Reed Bunting *E. pallasii*. By the end of the evening, ARL and WEO felt confident enough to suggest tentatively that the bird was indeed a female of this species.

During the next few days, the bird was seen in the same place by several people, but observations continued to be hampered by its skulking habits. It was difficult to flush and, when it did appear, it tended to dip and dive into cover in the manner of a Dunnock *Prunella modularis*, in contrast to the behaviour of nearby Reed Buntings. Everyone agreed that it was extraordinarily featureless, but, little by little, the following description was pieced together in the field:

SIZE AND JIZZ Smaller than Reed Bunting and about same length as Twite; rather scrawny, like Reed Bunting, and not stocky like Little Bunting. **PLUMAGE** Duller and darker than Reed Bunting, completely lacking any warm brown or chestnut tones. Upperparts generally dull brown, likened to colour of Redwing *Turdus iliacus*; mantle quite strongly streaked with blackish-brown and showing paler braces similar to many buntings, but these not very bright; faintly greyish tinge on nape gave slightly collared effect; rump appeared a little greyer than rest of upperparts, but not

easily seen. Facial pattern very indistinct, with faint darker streaks on crown; no clear supercilium, but greyish-white half-supercilium behind eye; orbital ring dull, off-white; ear-coverts dull brown, with dark smudge on cheeks, which lacked any dark edgings; moustachial pattern totally lacking. Wings: primaries dull brown, a little paler than secondaries; coverts with no obvious paler or warmer edgings and all looked heavily worn. Tail dark brownish-grey, with white in outer feathers. Underparts: from throat down, generally dull, greyish-white,

becoming cleaner white on belly and undertail-coverts; a little streaking on sides of upper breast formed into two small triangles on either side, otherwise only a few very faint streaks across pectoral area and only very faint greyish striations along flanks. BARE PARTS Bill small, conical and mid greyish-

horn. Legs pale greyish-brown. CALL Heard on several occasions, a soft 'chi-weep', recalling House Sparrow *Passer domesticus*, but not as thick or low-pitched; once or twice, this call was more explosive and recalled Richard's Pipit *Anthus novaeseelandiae*.

In an effort to establish its identity beyond doubt and rule out the unlikely possibility of its being a runt or aberrant Reed Bunting, several attempts were made to trap the bird before it was finally mist-netted at Taing late on 10th October. It was examined in the hand at the Observatory, where it was seen by several observers, most of whom had also seen it in the field. These included RAB, SDC, H. Gilston, R. J. Johns, ARL, WEO, the late R. A. Richardson, Dr A. G. G. Thomson and JW. It was ringed, measured, photographed in poor light and a detailed plumage description taken before it was roosted overnight. During the evening, RAR completed a water-colour sketch of the bird. The following morning, it was released back at Taing, but was not seen subsequently.

The following details were taken in the hand:

UPPERPARTS Forehead and crown, feathers with dark brown centres and paler, fawny-brown fringes, a few feathers, especially on forehead, appeared a little warmer; nape a little greyer than crown and feathers without dark centres, but some of the longest, lowest feathers with dark central streak; mantle feathers with broad dark brown centres and whitish-buff fringes (where not too heavily abraded) giving impression of dark bird with paler streaks; rump very pale grey, especially at base of tail, considerably greyer than mantle, feathers greyish-white with narrow darker, slightly gingery central streaks, many feathers heavily abraded and with exposed grey bases. HEAD Eye-ring indistinct and incomplete, off-white, paler than rest of head;

ear-coverts gingery-fawn, a little darker posteriorly and generally a little browner and paler than nape; lores mottled, similar to ear-coverts, although perhaps marginally greyer; no moustachial stripe. TAIL Extremely abraded, very dark brown; central feathers browner; outer feathers with diagonal line of demarcation between white and dark brown crossing shaft 28mm from tip and giving mainly white outer web and white wedge distally on inner web; penultimate feather with narrow white wedge on inner web extending 9mm along shaft from tip. WINGS Primaries and secondaries much abraded, dull medium brown, with very narrow gingery-brown fringes a little broader on secondaries and innermost two primaries;



210 & 211. Adult female Pallas's Reed Bunting *Emberiza pallasi*, Shetland, October 1976 (R. A. Broad)

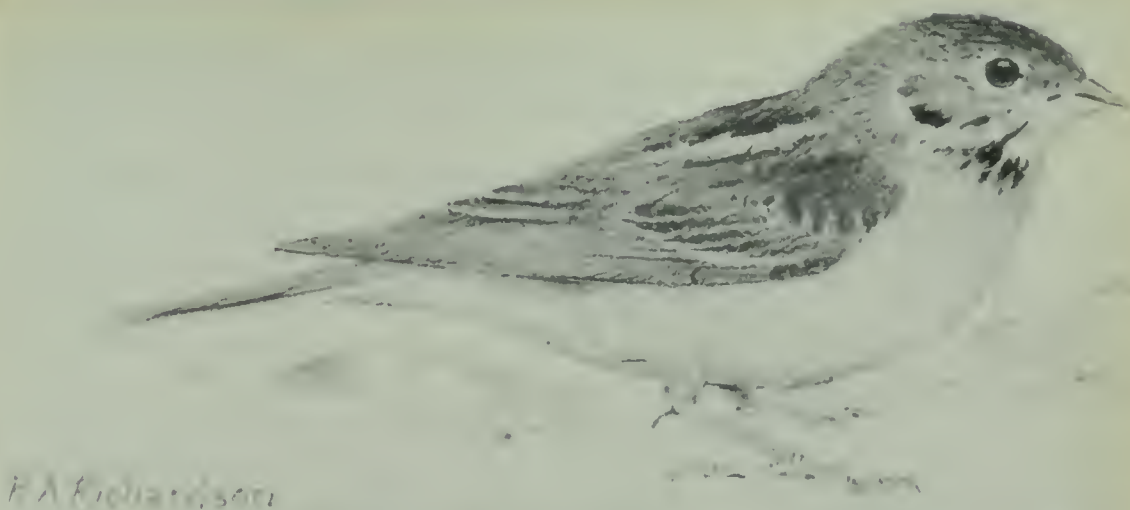


Fig. 1. Adult female Pallas's Reed Bunting *Emberiza pallasi*, Shetland, October 1976 (from colour painting by the late R. A. Richardson, loaned by Fair Isle Bird Observatory)

tertiaries heavily abraded, a little darker than secondaries, fringes with suggestion of warmer tinge, innermost heavily abraded, but showing buff-white outer web where protected by coverts; primary coverts and alula similar to primaries; greater coverts with darker centres than secondaries and narrow buff-white only at tip; lesser coverts grey, centres a little darker than fringes; underside of primaries and secondaries greyish-brown, with silvery tone; underwing-coverts dusky off-white, and axillaries a little darker. UNDERPARTS Chin off-white, surrounded by feathers with brown centres, paler, warmer fringes and rusty-brown tips, these extending upwards nearly to bill on each side, rather more strongly marked in lower throat region, forming partial gorget at sides of neck, and, when viewed head-on, these gave impression

of two distinct patches, recalling Calandra Lark *Melanocorypha calandra*, darker towards bill; belly, vent and undertail-coverts off-white, with greyish wash; flanks greyer than belly, probably partly due to severe abrasion and exposure of feather bases; thighs a little warmer and browner. BARE PARTS Bill: upper mandible dark greyish-black, lower mandible a little paler, with greyish-pink tinge at sides and towards gape. Eye dark brown-black. Legs dull fleshy-brown; claws grey. MEASUREMENTS Wing 67 mm (abraded); bill 11 mm; tarsus 17 mm; tail 56 mm (abraded); weight 14.2 g. WING FORMULA 1st primary 7 mm shorter than primary coverts; 3rd and 4th longest; 2nd -2 mm; 5th -2.5 mm; 6th -3 mm; 7th -6.5 mm; 8th -9 mm; 9th -9.5 mm; 10th -12 mm; emarginations on 3rd, 4th, 5th and slightly on 6th.

While in captivity, it often uttered a single anxiety note which was rendered as a cross between the calls of House Sparrow and Yellow Wagtail *Motacilla flava*.

In the hand, all the plumage was found to be exceedingly heavily worn, which suggested that the bird was an adult that had delayed its moult. The feather wear was normal except for the degree, and there were no obvious signs that the bird had recently been in captivity. Comparison of the details with Dementiev & Gladkov (1954) indicated that the wing formula was theoretically correct for both Pallas's Reed and Reed Bunting; all the measurements, however, were consistent with the former, and the plumage details compared favourably with the only details at our disposal of a female Pallas's Reed Bunting. Confirmation of its identity was found in Svensson (1975): the Reed Bunting appears to be the only species from which it needs separation; together with size, the lack of chestnut brown in the lesser wing-coverts, the practically unstreaked dusky or buffish-white rump and

the unstreaked or very nearly unstreaked underparts are given as diagnostic.

Shortly after their return to the mainland, WEO and RJJ visited the British Museum, Tring, where they were able to examine skins of Pallas's Reed Buntings. Among the skins, there were a number which—when allowance had been made for the abrasion—closely resembled the Fair Isle bird. Clearly, the original identification had been correct: it was an adult female Pallas's Reed Bunting which had delayed its moult. This record constitutes the first for Britain and Ireland.

Distribution of the species

Vaurie (1959) gave the breeding range of Pallas's Reed Bunting as central and eastern Siberia, probably northwest Manchuria and also Tian Shian in Chinese Turkestan (fig. 2). Within these boundaries, the question of geographical races is somewhat unclear. Vaurie (1959) gave three forms: the northern *E. p. polaris*, the southern *E. p. pallasi*, and *E. p. lydiae* from the lacustrine depression of Outer Mongolia, which carries a caveat suggesting that it may be sufficiently distinct to warrant specific status. Dementiev & Gladkov (1954) considered that only the southern and northern forms were sufficiently substantiated.



Fig. 2. Breeding distribution of Pallas's Reed Bunting *Emberiza pallasi* (after Dementiev & Gladkov 1954). Dotted lines indicate incompletely clarified boundaries

E. p. polaris (the northern Polar Bunting of Dementiev & Gladkov) nests throughout the greater part of the species' breeding range, predominantly on lowland tundra and river valleys with shrub thickets. *E. p. pallasi* (the southern Polar Bunting of Dementiev & Gladkov) also nests in the subalpine zone, mainly between 2,200 and 2,400m, but the boundary between the two forms is incompletely known. The species is migratory and in winter is found in Outer and Inner Mongolia, Korea and northern China south to the inner Yangtze (Vaurie 1959), where it is found mainly in the plains, preferring irrigated areas with shrub and reed thickets. Stragglers have been recorded well to the west of the breeding range within the Soviet Union (Dementiev & Gladkov 1954). Although Heinzel *et al.* (1974) and

Bruun & Singer (1975) referred to a vagrant very much farther west, in Denmark, this record (of an adult male on 3rd May 1954: *Dansk Ornithologisk Forenings Tidsskrift* 48: 219-220) was not accepted in recent official Danish check-lists (Salomonsen 1963, Dybbro 1978).

Plumage variation within the species

In general, the southern form, *E. p. pallasi*, averages a little larger and is generally lighter in colour than *E. p. polaris*, with the longitudinal dark streaking less well developed (Dementiev & Gladkov 1954). The Fair Isle individual was judged most closely to resemble skins labelled *E. p. montanus* collected in Turkestan. The taxonomic position of this form is unclear; it is mentioned neither by Vaurie (1959) nor by Dementiev & Gladkov (1954), although there is reference in the latter work to *Cynchramus p. montana*, which is given as a synonym of *E. p. pallasi*. The fact that skins labelled *E. p. pallasi* were quite distinct, being clearly paler and buffier than those labelled *E. p. montanus*, does little to clarify this confusing situation. It is, however, quite clear that, within the species, there is considerable variation in plumage, both seasonal and individual, and this should be kept in mind in case this species should reappear here. This variation is further emphasised by Kitson (1979), who described birds in—or approaching—breeding plumage in Mongolia. The plumage of the Fair Isle bird differed in a number of ways from Kitson's adult female Pallas's Reeds. In essence, it was a considerably toned-down version, washed over in dull browns and off-whites, which obscured the salient features, especially the supercilium and the malar stripes shown in Kitson's drawings. Mention by Kitson of the lesser wing-coverts being chestnut and apparently identical to those of Reed Buntings is also at variance with the Fair Isle bird, as it is with Svensson (1975), who gave the grey lesser wing-coverts of Pallas's Reed as a diagnostic feature of the species.

Other Siberian species at Fair Isle in September 1976

D. I. M. Wallace, in O'Sullivan *et al.* (1977), drew attention to the complex fall of Siberian and Asiatic species at Fair Isle and on the British east coast between 25th and 27th September 1976. On Fair Isle, however, vagrants with such easterly origins arrived throughout the second half of the month (Broad 1976). The first was a Lanceolated Warbler *Locustella lanceolata* on 14th, followed by another on 17th and a Pechora Pipit *Anthus gustavi*. Then came a Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler *L. certhiola* on 20th, a Citrine Wagtail *Motacilla citreola* on 22nd, the first of several Richard's Pipits on 23rd and a Stonechat *Saxicola torquata* showing the characteristics of one of the eastern races *maura* or *stejnegeri* on 27th, when there was also a Pallas's Warbler *Phylloscopus proregulus* at the southern tip of mainland Shetland. Owing to its extremely skulking behaviour, it is a matter for conjecture how long the Pallas's Reed Bunting had gone undetected before the first sighting on 27th September and where exactly its arrival fits in a calendar so full of eastern rarities.

Acknowledgments

We were very glad to have the benefit of the late R. A. Richardson's artistic talent, particularly

in the form of his water-colour painting of the bird. Sadly, the original went astray in the post, but a copy commissioned by H. Gilston has since kindly been donated to the Fair Isle Bird Observatory. The help of the staff of the British Museum is fully acknowledged for allowing WEO to examine skins in their collection at Tring; and we were both very grateful for the help of R. J. Johns during the final deliberations and during the examination of the skins.

Summary

An adult female Pallas's Reed Bunting *Emberiza pallasii* was discovered on Fair Isle, Shetland, on 29th September 1976, and was last seen on 11th October; it was trapped on 10th October. This is the first record of this Asiatic species in Britain and Ireland.

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Mystery photographs

45 The young of many species look quite different from adults, and the subject of last month's mystery photograph is a classic example. It is an immature Rose-coloured Starling *Sturnus roseus*, photographed by Bobby Tulloch during its stay on Yell, Shetland, from 3rd to 11th November 1977. In addition to the unfamiliar plumage, would-be identifiers may also have been tricked into looking outside the genus *Sturnus* for a solution by the rather thrush-like bill shape, quite unlike the slightly longer, straighter, dagger-like bill of a Starling *S. vulgaris*. Otherwise, Rose-coloured Starling is very similar in shape, behaviour and some of its calls



212. Mystery photograph 46. Identify the species. Answer next month



to its common relative, except for the adult's shaggy crest, which is also sometimes subtly suggested on immatures by a more rounded and loosely feathered rear crown and nape; and its slightly longer legs and larger and more heavily-built feet, which may give a more 'leggy' appearance. On immatures, the head and body plumage is distinctively uniform sandy-fawn, paler on the throat, belly and rump (the latter often striking in flight: see *Brit. Birds* 69: 222), quite unlike the drab grey-brown of a juvenile Starling. The wing and tail feathers are dark (the contrast with the pale body feathers hinting at the adult pattern), with neat sandy fringes. The bill is mainly yellowish, with dark on the culmen and tip varying in extent; the legs are typically fleshy-pink or pale reddish, and the dark eye is usually prominent in the otherwise plain, pale head. In fact, all these features combine to give a very striking appearance and, contrary to the impression which may be given by some field guides that it is just a pale version of juvenile Starling, an immature Rose-coloured is virtually impossible to overlook or mistake: as is so often the case when given a good view of a supposed 'difficult' rarity. The pitfall of a leucistic juvenile Starling—or even a leucistic adult (see *Brit. Birds* 72: 79-80)—needs to be borne in mind, however, and a careful check of all the features, especially the diagnostic bill shape, is always advisable.

Here seems a suitable place to air another 'mystery' concerning immature Rose-coloured Starlings. The literature states that, like Starling, Rose-coloured has a complete post-juvenile moult in late summer and autumn (complete by October according to *The Handbook*), with the resultant first-winter plumage resembling that of a dull winter adult. Immatures which have occurred in Britain in late autumn or early winter, however, like the November individual featured here, have differed very little, if at all, from full juveniles, and apparently none has shown signs of wing or tail moult. Either the species does not in fact have a complete post-juvenile moult (unlikely in view of the wide reference to such in the literature), or the first-winter plumage is often little different. Perhaps the adult-like plumage is not usually acquired until first-summer, after the head and body moult of its first spring?

PJG

Notes

Coots eating goose-droppings At Martin Mere, near Ormskirk, Lancashire, the wintering wild Coots *Fulica atra* have developed the coprophagous habit. The feral population of 75 Pink-footed Geese *Anser brachyrhynchus* is fed with a supplement of wheat grain twice a day, but probably at least half of their diet consists of pasture grass. The droppings of the geese, particularly in cold weather, are avidly sought by the Coots. Indeed, it sometimes appears that one or two Coots are deliberately alarming the geese in order to make them defecate: they stand in front of a goose, flapping their wings and jumping up, and, as soon as the goose defecates, dash round and consume the dropping. Presumably the very rapid throughput of food means that a green goose-dropping is still capable of supplying nutrition to a vegetarian such as the Coot. The behaviour seems to occur only in winter and to be much enhanced by cold, frosty weather, as in February 1978. We know of no other reference to this dietary speciality, but so many of the 50 or so Coots indulge that we assume that it is fairly normal.

JANET KEAR, NIGELLA HILLGARTH and SUSAN ANDERS
Martin Mere, Burscough, near Ormskirk, Lancashire



Observations of nesting Houbara Bustards On 16th March 1978, in south Morocco, my wife and I found the nest of a Houbara Bustard *Chlamydotis undulata* in an area of nearly bare hammada (stony) desert, on the flat top of a slight rise of gently undulating ground. The immediate area was open, with occasional almost leafless bushes smaller than the bustards, and a few rocks. When first seen on the nest, viewed from a vehicle at about 100m, the bustard seemed entirely at ease, with head in a 'natural' position above the level of its domed back. Quite frequently, it turned its head a little one way or another. The following day, my wife observed the incubating bird from the car at a range of about 100m, having left me in dead ground some 500m away. She noted that the head was lower, with crown level with the top of the back, but, about the time that I started walking towards it, its head shot up on its fully extended neck; about 20 seconds later, it left the nest, walking quite fast and speeding up almost to a run after about 30m. The nest, containing two eggs, consisted of a saucer of about 23cm diameter, from which almost all the loose surface stones had been removed. Within the saucer, the eggs were encircled by a shallow trough, presumably caused by scrabbling of the bird's feet as it rotated or shifted position on the nest. The lack of stones, and slight disturbance of the ground surface, caused the nest to stand out as a bare, sandy coloured circle, brighter and paler than its drab, stone-mottled surroundings. Twice a concealed microphone was left close to the nest and on both occasions a very faint note was recorded from the incubating bustard: 'quop' on the first day and 'quip' on the second, so soft that it would probably have been virtually inaudible at a

range of more than 1 m. One imagines that this note would develop into the bird's communication with its chicks as hatching approached.

P. A. D. HOLLAM

Crastock Cottage, Crastock, Woking, Surrey

We do not normally publish detailed notes on a single nest: only those of great interest or which describe hitherto unrecorded information. EDS

Curlew carrying egg At 06.47 GMT on 3rd June 1978, while studying Lapwings *Vanellus vanellus* near Evie on Mainland, Orkney, we saw a Curlew *Numenius arquata* fly over the field at about 10m with its head drooping slightly and an egg attached to the tip of its beak. It faltered in its flight and dropped the egg, which we later collected. It was a Curlew's egg and the yolk was fresh; there were two triangular breaks near the pointed end where the Curlew's beak had pierced the shell.

MILDRED F. CUTHBERT and LOYLA A. PICOZZI

Vishabreck, Evie, Mainland, Orkney

Turnstone alighting on sea The recent account by Dr G. Beven and M. D. England (*Brit. Birds* 70: 23-32) mentioned that Turnstones *Arenaria interpres* may rest on the sea during migration. This prompts me to record one such incident seen on board the British Ocean Weather ship *Weather Monitor* at weather station 'India' (59°N 19°W) in the North Atlantic. Migrants, including several species of wader, are regularly seen from, and sometimes land on, weather ships (*Brit. Birds* 44: 219-222), and a Turnstone arrived on board on 5th August 1973. It frequented the stern, usually the least disturbed place, and allowed approach to within 2m. During the day, the stern became crowded and it flew off and landed on the sea some 20m away, the ship lying stopped and the sea state being slight (Beaufort state 3). Several Fulmars *Fulmarus glacialis* and Gannets *Sula bassana* flying nearby took no notice of it, and, after about a minute, it took off without any difficulty and returned to the afterdeck rail. Later the same day, it repeated the performance, this time remaining on the sea for about five minutes before returning to the stern. Although *The Handbook* refers to Turnstones as (exceptionally) settling on the sea, no reference is given; D. A. Bannerman (1961, *The Birds of the British Isles*) stated that they 'may rest awhile on a calm sea', but this does not seem to have been observed. A. W. G. JOHN

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Feeding association between Black-headed Gulls and diving ducks

Earlier, I described a feeding association between Black-headed Gulls *Larus ridibundus* and Goldeneyes *Bucephala clangula* (*Brit. Birds* 68: 295-296). I have subsequently observed Black-headed Gulls frequently associating with diving Tufted Ducks *Aythya fuligula*, Pochards *A. ferina* and Ruddy Ducks *Oxyura jamaicensis*, as well as Goldeneyes, at several places in the West Midlands. It is now clear that the gulls are feeding on material brought to the surface by the turbulence created by the ducks. Feeding is most intense in the wake of the duck's diving, but also occurs in the disturbance created

by their surfacing. The turbulence caused by the initial leap and plunge is somewhat greater than that from surfacing, and the gulls follow the ducks across the water to take advantage of the next dive. The most frequently seen association has been with Tufted Ducks, but this is generally less conspicuous as the gulls need to move little to keep in touch with surfacing Tufteds. It is more obvious with Goldeneyes, which travel farther during a dive. A Black-headed Gull once attempted to associate with a Great Crested Grebe *Podiceps cristatus*, but had difficulty maintaining contact with the greater length of dive, and eventually stopped. Only once was physical contact observed, when a gull forced a Tufted Duck to drop what appeared to be a small fish. Quite often, a gull landing near a duck caused the latter to dive, which may well have been the intention, in order to create more surface disturbance.

This feeding association is clearly widespread among Black-headed Gulls. Although I have seen Herring Gulls *L. argentatus* take advantage of disturbance created by diving ducks close by, I have never seen one deliberately follow a duck.

JOHN GERRARD

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Black-headed Gulls have previously been recorded associating with Shovelers *Anas clypeata* (*Brit. Birds* 61: 31), and a later note described gulls associating with feeding flocks of Great Crested Grebes (*Brit. Birds* 69: 506). Dr K. E. L. Simmons has remarked that the gulls will attend the latter species to rob them of fish. Eds

Large gatherings of Cuckoos The note on large gathering of Cuckoos *Cuculus canorus* (*Brit. Birds* 72: 552) recalled a similar occurrence in early May 1952. At about 14.30 GMT, at a cricket field between Monton Green and Worsley, Greater Manchester, bounded by the Bridgewater Canal and thick woodland surrounding a railway line, I heard a very loud and persistent outcry of bird noise. I recognised many Cuckoo calls, but they seemed to be calling continuously and indiscriminately. The Cuckoos were all moving about, flitting from branch to branch and tree to tree, and at the time I thought that there must have been 100 or more. In May 1942, while stationed at Wynnstay Hall, near Ruabon, Clwyd, there was a report of a flock of up to 20 Cuckoos in the Dee Valley near Llangollen, apparently making a remarkable noise; in the same month, another report mentioned 'many Cuckoos' making a lot of noise in the Tanat Valley near Llangedwyn. I have also twice seen up to five Cuckoos together in very hot weather in early to mid July.

J. R. Cox

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In May 1905, at Edenfield, Lancashire, 13 Cuckoos were seen together (C. K. Parker); and on 3rd May 1971, at Birkdale, Southport, Lancashire, 23 were counted in a field (J. E. Ashworth). In Belgium, Dr J. S. Spaepen (*in litt.*) is quite familiar with groups of Cuckoos on spring passage: in 1975, he and his colleagues ringed eight on 4th May, four on 9th May, ten on 11th and four on 16th. In the third week of May 1974, on St Agnes, Isles of Scilly, 11 Cuckoos were seen flying as a flock from field to field (K. A. Baker,

verbally). At a farm near The Lizard, Cornwall, up to seven or eight can be seen in spring on telegraph wires or on what is traditionally known as Cuckoo Rock; they seldom stay more than an hour or two (letter by John Kemp, *Western Morning News*, 17th June 1975). On 27th April 1975, a dozen or more Cuckoos were seen at about 08.00 GMT flying in over the sea from the south to Chynalls Point, Coverack, only about 16km from The Lizard; they rested on the rocks at the seaward end of the headland for a while, then flew back and forth along the coast in pairs, some gradually dispersing inland during the morning while a few stayed in trees near the Headland Hotel (Mr and Mrs J. A. Arthur *in litt.*). On Cape Clear Island, Co. Cork, it is fairly normal in spring to see up to 15 Cuckoos in a day, and, at the end of May 1967, 21 or more were present, including constantly singing flocks of up to 14 flying around the island (Dr J. T. R. Sharrock *in litt.*). In autumn, on 17th August 1974, near South Brent, Devon, about 30 pitched briefly in a *Macrocarpa* tree then flew off northwards, followed shortly after by another ten; on 8th August 1979, at the same place, a close flock of 30 to 50 flew west (Mrs D. Chubb).

From the facts available, it seems that, in Britain and Ireland, Cuckoos are usually seen only in ones or twos, even at migration times; but it is also clear that occasionally up to a score or more will congregate, most likely when migration is in full swing.

H. G. HURRELL

Moorgate, South Brent, Devon

C. Oakes (1953, *The Birds of Lancashire*) mentioned 13 Cuckoos together near Chatterton on 5th May 1905, and the *Lancashire Bird Report* for 1971 included a record of 23 in a field at Birkdale on 3rd May. K. G. SPENCER
18 St Matthew Street, Burnley, Lancashire

On 23rd July 1978, a neighbour telephoned me to say that on that day he had seen 'more than 30, possibly 50 Cuckoos' near a moorland glen southeast of Tain, Ross-shire. Tain lies directly south of the east Sutherland coastline: the moorland could have been the first area of heather moor reached by birds flying down that coast after crossing Dornoch Firth, where they might meet others travelling southeast along the escarpment above the tree line along the south coast of the firth.

C. G. HEADLAM

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Further to my own observations at Dungeness, Kent, in 1967-69, N. Riddiford has informed me (*in litt.*) that, during autumn passage, gatherings of Cuckoos are commonplace there: groups of eight to 12 have been noted regularly since the late 1960s. Trapping has shown an apparent rapid through movement in July, dominated by adults in the first half of the month, immediately (but not always) followed by juveniles. Peaks often occur when these movements overlap. Although turnover is rapid, migrant Cuckoos almost certainly use their off-passage time searching out an abundant food source, which is the probable reason for their concentration. R. E. Scott (*in litt.*) has confirmed my recollection that these gatherings were not widely scattered and were on or close to the ground. The prey was

almost certainly the larvae of the brown-tail moth *Bombyx phaeorrhoeus* which, although widespread in the area, were readily accessible on thin, scrubby blackthorn *Prunus spinosa* on open shingle surrounding the main bushes. Detailed records from *Dungeness Bird Reports* 1952-67 and *Kent Bird Reports* 1968-77 are: (1952-62) 'Return passage commences early July with adult birds numbering up to 18 (1961) but far smaller numbers from August onwards'; (1965) 'up to eight in early July'; (1966) 'ten on 2nd and 22nd July'; (1967) 'peak of 18 on 19th June. Only up to six (5th) during July. In August, seven on 24th'; (1968) '12 on 17th July'; (1969) 'ten on 13th July, eight on 20th'; (1974) '14 on 22nd June'. Of likely departure points for the Continent in autumn, Dungeness appears to be alone in recording concentrations of Cuckoos (*Kent Bird Reports* 1968-77; *Sussex Bird Reports* 1954-78; Portland Bird Observatory daily logs 1959-79 *per* M. Rogers *in litt.*).

M. J. ROGERS

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D. A. Christie has commented as follows: 'The major points of my original note were the large concentration of 50 or more Cuckoos, the fact that they were all acting as one flock, and the remarkable noise they were making. The incident occurred in spring, and presumably related to incoming migrants. Mr Cox's observation appears very similar, but it is also interesting to note the apparent scarcity of such reports and the behaviour of Cuckoos on autumn passage.' Eds

Swallow apparently feeding Willow Warbler At about 09.00 GMT on 15th July 1978, in a suburb of Middlesbrough, Cleveland, I was watching a Willow Warbler *Phylloscopus trochilus* sitting on a leafless branch of a tree. I was surprised when a Swallow *Hirundo rustica* flew up to it, hovered, and appeared to feed it. I have never before seen this behaviour between these two species.

NEIL DUMMIGAN

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Such interspecific feeding would seem improbable; Dr C. H. Fry has commented that the hovering might equally have been to assuage the Swallow's transient interest in the Willow Warbler. Eds

Roosting behaviour of migrant House Martins I read K. G. Spencer's letter (*Brit. Birds* 71: 89) with interest. In the late evening of 22nd July 1975, in my garden at Slinfold, West Sussex, I became aware of a party of birds flying very quickly, silently and in tight formation, at a height of about 3m around the trees and larger bushes. When two were disturbed from a wild cherry *Prunus avium* in which they had settled momentarily, they uttered the typical alarm note of the House Martin *Delichon urbica*. At about 20.00 GMT on 21st September 1976, at the same location, I watched three House Martins engage in similar activity. Again, the main features were the persistently low, silent flight in a group; but, on this occasion, they eventually flew up to unoccupied House Martin nests and hovered in front of them for several seconds, before finally dropping away into the darkness at bush-top height.

On 15th September 1975, at Liddington, Wiltshire, I observed five House Martins continuing to fly very low around the area for at least 20

minutes from 20.40 GMT. They finally perched in lateral strands of a climbing shrub, *Clematis montana*, trained across the top of a car-port. One hour later, they were disturbed when an external light was switched on; they flew to a nearby larch *Latrix decidua*, but it is not known if they continued to roost there through the night.

S. W. M. HUGHES

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Head patterns of Olive-backed Pipits In December 1978, I spent four weeks in Thailand and saw approximately 100 Olive-backed Pipits *Anthus hodgsoni*. It was with interest, therefore, that I later read of the distinctive 'supercilium drop' mentioned by Kitson (1979), a feature of which I had previously been unaware. Were my powers of observation somewhat less than satisfactory or was this feature not as reliable as at first thought? In November 1979, I spent eight weeks in Nepal and saw a further 350 Olive-backed Pipits, including about 40 observed sufficiently closely to distinguish their head patterns (a typical encounter would be at a forest edge or clearing when a small flock of pipits, eight being an average number, would fly up from the ground calling loudly and dive into the nearest tree foliage, most remaining hidden and only one or two individuals being visible).

The head patterns varied considerably, mainly due to the size and location of the supercilium drop. About 10% had very bright and extensive supercilia and submoustachial stripes which joined around the rear edge of the ear-coverts except for the dark eye-stripe below the supercilium; thus, the supercilium drop extended to, and joined up with, the submoustachial stripe (e.g. see *Brit. Birds* 70: plate 117, where it should also be noted that the dark ear-covert spot is still present although slightly displaced). About 60% were of the type illustrated by R. A. Hume's drawing in Conder (1979), but varying from those having an extensive drop (e.g. *Brit. Birds* 72: 35) to those with only a very small or virtually non-existent spot (e.g. *Brit. Birds* 72: plate 1; 73: plate 106). On one or two, the spot merged with the supercilium, suppressing the eye-stripe at that point, and in some it was much nearer to the submoustachial stripe than to the supercilium. On virtually all, however, the dark spot on the ear-coverts was visible; this seems a much more constant feature than the drop. The remaining 30% showed no visible drop; they were split evenly into those identical to the previous types but with the drop so far reduced as to be invisible in the field (e.g. *Brit. Birds* 72: plate 2), and those with uniform ear-coverts. The latter had generally rather shorter supercilia and less distinct submoustachial stripes, and on only a few was a very faint darker area on the ear-coverts discernible; all, however, showed the other characteristics and call-notes of Olive-backed Pipit.

With practice, I believe that individual Olive-backed Pipits could be identified by their ear-covert patterns, in the same way that Bewick's Swans *Cygnus columbianus* are by their bill patterns.

My observations indicate that some Olive-backed Pipits show no supercilium drop and even, in a few cases, no dark spot on the ear-coverts. A pipit seen briefly flying into cover should not be dismissed because a

prominent supercilium drop was not noted, but should be followed up as diligently as if it had.

RICHARD J. FAIRBANK

5 Nizells Avenue, Hove, East Sussex

REFERENCES

CONDER, P. 1979. Britain's first Olive-backed Pipit. *Brit. Birds* 72: 2-4.

KITSON, A. R. 1979. Identification of Olive-backed Pipit, Blyth's Pipit and Pallas's Reed Bunting. *Brit. Birds* 72: 94-100.

—1980. Mystery photographs 41 Olive-backed Pipit. *Brit. Birds* 73: 226-227.

Wren dust-bathing The note by Miss J. M. Stainton (*Brit. Birds* 71: 130) prompts me to record the following. On a number of occasions during the summer of 1975, in my garden at Liddington, Wiltshire, I watched a Wren *Troglodytes troglodytes* dust-bathing. It used the same 'hole' each time, and the dust-bath usually lasted less than two minutes; but on 29th July it lasted for about eight minutes, during which time the Wren moved around in the hole at least four times in a clockwise direction. The hole was in soil in an open position in a flat flower border. House Sparrows *Passer domesticus* dust-bathed frequently about 2m from the hole in the same flower border, but on a small southwestern-facing ridge and just within the shade of a *Buddleia* shrub. The sparrows were never seen to use the Wren's hole, and, when the two species dust-bathed at the same time, neither joined the other.

STEPHEN B. EDWARDS

Hazeldene, Medbourne Lane, Liddington, near Swindon, Wiltshire

Nesting Blackbirds attacking Collared Dove In late April 1979, a pair of Collared Doves *Streptopelia decaocto* built a nest in one of a line of bushes growing up the wall of a building at the Wildfowl Trust, Slimbridge, Gloucestershire. In the same bushes, about 5m away, there was the nest and eggs of a pair of Blackbirds *Turdus merula*.

I was passing the building one morning, before the Collared Dove had laid, when I saw one of the doves on the ground below its nest, being strongly attacked by both Blackbirds. The female Blackbird stayed on the ground, making short rushes towards the dove, and giving its scolding 'chick-chick' call. The male Blackbird was performing dive-bombing attacks on the dove, swooping down from the top of the building about 6m up, low over the head of the dove, then up to another part of the roof. It did this four times while I watched before the dove flew off, hotly pursued by both, calling Blackbirds. No further interactions were seen. This particular Collared Dove's nest was not successful; there are, however, other pressures on them in the area apart from Blackbirds.

Other records of Collared Doves being mobbed have included the suggestion that the dove was mistaken for a Cuckoo *Cuculus canorus*, or perhaps a male Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus* (*Brit. Birds* 71: 221 and next note, below). The Slimbridge Blackbirds, however, could hardly have had closer views of the dove, but still reacted as if their nest was threatened.

M. A. OGILVIE

Wildfowl Trust, Slimbridge, Gloucester GL2 7BT

Antagonism of nesting Song Thrush to Collared Dove In June 1978, at Ashbourne, Derbyshire, a pair of Song Thrushes *Turdus philomelos* built a nest on a buttress on my creeper-covered garden wall, 2m from the ground. Shortly afterwards, a pair of Collared Doves *Streptopelia decaocto* began to build in a nearby pear *Pyrus*, the two nests being rather less than 4m apart. The thrushes did their utmost to prevent the doves from building, one flying in the face of the dove as it approached with a twig, and constantly uttering alarm notes. This behaviour continued throughout the nesting period, sometimes resulting in mid-air collisions. In spite of this, the doves persevered and reared two young. The male dove sometimes took the offensive and ran along the adjacent lawn, with head lowered and feathers fluffed, in pursuit of the thrush, which retired in the face of this. The thrush heckled and harried the dove as it perched, usually in a crouching attitude with feathers fluffed as though expecting attack, either on the wall or in the pear tree near its sitting mate. After the young had hatched, when the doves took flight together, a thrush would fly in pursuit. On 14th July, the young doves left the nest and the adults did not return to the tree; for the next few days the young often sat in the pear close to their old nest, but the thrushes took no further notice.

KATHLEEN HOLLICK

The Old House, Ashbourne, Derbyshire DE6 1AJ

That Collared Doves may evoke a predator response in some birds has already been shown by Dr J. T. R. Sharrock (*Brit. Birds* 71: 221), and, as Dr C. H. Fry has commented, this is further suggested in this instance by the fact that the unhawk-like young doves were ignored by the Song Thrushes. Eds

Repeated bill-touching by pair of Mistle Thrushes At 19.30 GMT on 16th June 1978, in a garden at Bentry, Bristol, I saw in good light a female Mistle Thrush *Turdus viscivorus* fly from her nest in a tree where she had been brooding young about six days old. She was joined by her mate and both perched on a long, open branch of a tree about 20m away, where they churred aggressively. Between rattling bursts of churring, the two turned four times to face each other, and on each occasion touched each other's bills (either closed or partly open) four or five times. This continued for over a minute before the thrushes flew off, still churring loudly. A. P. RADFORD

2 Wyck Beck Road, Bentry, Bristol BS10 7JE

Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler in Norfolk At midday on 13th September 1976, I was walking along the seawall near the coastguard station at Cley, Norfolk, when I flushed what I momentarily took to be a Sedge Warbler *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus*. I had it in clear view for several seconds as it flew about 60m, and it was immediately obvious to me that it was no ordinary Sedge Warbler. Its fanned tail was long, broad and rounded, like some *Locustella* warblers, and appeared uniform dark grey in colour, with obvious, though not pronounced, greyish-white tips to each feather. The tips made each feather look neatly rounded rather than pointed or ragged as on many Sedge Warblers at that time of year. The rump was a dark dull brick-red, with darker edgings to some of the feathers, which created an effect that was neither barred nor spotted but best

described as 'rumpled'. It contrasted markedly with the tail, but not with the back or mantle, which had a similar ground colour, heavily overlaid with dark greyish-brown streaks.

After a 20-minute wait, I relocated the warbler, which was creeping about in the base of the reeds *Phragmites*, and was able to watch it for a further two minutes or so. Since it was performing a sort of 'side-step' through the stems, most of the best views were head-on. The head pattern resembled that of a Sedge Warbler, but was darker, and the supercilium was pure white and noticeably thinner, not broadening over the eye. The feature that really demanded attention, however, was its satiny white underparts, which contrasted strikingly with the very dark upperparts and was further emphasised by the ear-coverts which, unlike a Sedge Warbler, were dark and streaked like the crown. There was also a buffish suffusion along the flanks and across the breast, which was densely overlaid with blackish-brown spots and 'semi-streaks' to form a distinct gorget. This combination reminded me of certain pale juvenile Whinchats *Saxicola rubetra*. The bill appeared dark grey and the legs flesh-pink.

I waited a further 10 minutes and then tried to flush it, without success. I realised by then that I must have been looking at one of the rarer *Locustella* warblers. Its size and well-defined supercilium seemed to eliminate Lanceolated Warbler *L. lanceolata*; the colour of the rump and the shape and pattern of the tail were equally clearly not those of Moustached Warbler *A. melanopogon*. I later confirmed the identification by reference to *The Handbook*. At the request of the Rarities Committee, P. R. Colston examined skins at the British Museum (Tring): the colour of the underparts of the Norfolk individual fell within the range of variation of Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler *L. certhiola*.

This record was only the fourth of this Asiatic warbler in Britain and Ireland, the previous three being at Rockabill Lighthouse, Co. Dublin, in September 1908 and on Fair Isle, Shetland, in October 1949 (*Brit. Birds* 43: 49-51) and October 1956 (*Brit. Birds* 50: 395-396). A fifth occurred only a week after the one in Norfolk: for the third time on Fair Isle, on 20th-24th September 1976.

GRAHAM SMITH

48 The Meads, Ingatstone, Essex

Marsh frogs seizing Bonelli's Warbler and Yellow Wagtail On the afternoon of 20th August 1974, in the Ebro Delta, Tarragona, Spain, following a morning of continuous heavy rain and increasing wind, we watched a grounded Bonelli's Warbler *Phylloscopus bonelli* feeding on low herbage beside a track separating rice-paddy from a reed-fringed lake. Shortly afterwards we heard a distress call and saw a medium-sized marsh frog *Rana ridibunda* dragging the warbler by the wing across the track towards the lake. We rescued the warbler unharmed and ringed it: a first-year with no visible subcutaneous fat and the unusually low weight of 5.6g (23 Bonelli's Warblers mist-netted in Spain averaged 8.18g, range 6.2-10.1g). On 19th September 1977, at Lake Koronia, Macedonia, Greece, a Yellow Wagtail *Motacilla flava* mist-netted at a roost over mud and water on the shore was hanging below the net caught only by one wing,

about 8 cm clear of the surface, when its free wing was seized by a 6-cm long marsh frog. The frog was not heavy enough to pull the wagtail down, and released it when closely approached. The first incident is similar to those described by J. Rabøl (*Brit. Birds* 71: 85) in which Goldcrests *Regulus regulus* were killed by edible frogs *Rana esculenta*, and suggests that exhausted birds may be especially vulnerable. Hellmich (1962, *Reptiles and Amphibians of Europe*, p. 74) stated that small birds are among the favourite prey of marsh frogs.

P. J. BELMAN and P. A. I. EDDINGS
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Blue Tit with white head At about 14.30 GMT on 8th April 1978, at Welwyn Garden City, Hertfordshire, I saw, from 3-5 m in excellent light, a pair of Blue Tits *Parus caeruleus* in a small tree not yet in leaf. One lacked the normal blue crown and had an all-white head except for a thin black eye-stripe. Its head appeared remarkably like that of an Azure Tit *P. cyanus*, with which it might have been confused at a glance.

JOHN CORFIELD
15 Mannicotts, Welwyn Garden City, Hertfordshire

Letters

Another mystery photograph: Great Northern or Black-throated Diver? In my opinion, the photograph of a winter-plumaged diver, captioned 'Great Northern Diver *Gavia immer* just starting to moult, Glamorgan, March 1929' (*Brit. Birds* 64: plate 77b), portrays a first-winter Black-throated Diver *G. arctica*. My reasons are as follows:

1. **HEAD SHAPE** Although the rather steep, peaked forehead and flattish crown are indeed suggestive of Great Northern, personal observations lead me to believe that this head shape is often also shown by winter-plumaged Black-throated Divers. This is rarely conveyed in field guides, but was by D. I. M. Wallace in *BWP* (vol. 1, page 43).

2. **BILL** The bill is strikingly long, straight and dagger-like: typical of Black-throated. Great Northern Divers usually show much heavier, deeper bills, which do not appear as long relative to their depth.

3. **HEAD AND NECK COLORATION** The top of the head and upper hindneck are noticeably lighter in tone than the upper body, shading blacker towards the forehead and lores. Great Northerns in winter plumage generally show much darker upper head and hindneck, without any real differentiation in tone between the forehead and the crown, and often with dusky rear-cheeks. In the photograph there is a vague suggestion of a diffuse darker tone on the side of the neck along the border between the light foreneck and the grey hindneck. This is a feature which I have noticed on several winter-plumaged Black-

throated Divers; it often continues in a narrow point onto the whitish sides of the lower throat, giving an illusory impression of taut neck muscles. Unfortunately, most of the neck is hidden in the photograph, but note the brightness of the foreneck and breast. Even allowing for the angle of viewing, I think that a Great Northern would probably show the foremost extensions of the dark semi-collar extending around the sides of the lower neck.

4. **EYE-RING** In my experience, Great Northern Divers in adult winter and first-winter plumages invariably show a more or less prominent pale area surrounding the eye. The absence of this feature on Black-throated Diver contributes to a very different facial character.

5. **UPPERPARTS** The scapulars are light-tipped against the essentially dark upper body, giving a suggestion of alternate light and dark transverse barring. Although this is quite normal on Black-throated (particularly first-winters), it is generally associated more with Great Northern, probably because it is much more prominent and extensive on first-

DUN LAOGHAIRE

WIND SE 7 3 4

27TH JAN 1950.VERY COLD
MAINLY DRY, SOME RAIN IN
AFTERNOON.
WILL BE FOGGY

(JEF, KM, EH)

BLACK-THROATED DIVER

RED-NECKED GREBE

MEDITERRANEAN DOLL (2ND 1ST)LITTLE GULLS (4TH).

NOTE CUBE-HEADED

APPEARANCE FROM
BEHIND.PECULIAR COLORED
EYE (EYE) EYESNOTE BASE OF WING NECK
RISING IN SLOPE IN A
POINT TOWARD THE END OF THE
WING AND THE TAIL

BLACK-THROATED DIVER

NOTE DRINKING DRINK-NECKED
ATTITUDE

FULL CHICKS

FOUR NECKS
CREASENECK OFTEN APPEARED QUITE
THIN & SNAKEY
PEAKED FOREHEADWINGS IN 'SHOULDER' APPEARED
DARK AT MODERATE RANGE
INDISTINCT WHITE BARKING
CONSPICUOUS WHITE THIGH
PATCH

Figs. 1 & 2. Sketches of Black-throated *Gavia arctica* (page 420) and Great Northern Divers *G. immer* (page 421) from field notebook (Killian Mullarney)

winter Great Northern than on first-winter Black-throated and can therefore be detected on Great Northerns with relative ease, even at long range.

6. UNDERPARTS The bird appears to have rolled over slightly onto its far side, and is therefore showing rather a lot of its near flank. All winter-plumaged divers will show a similar extent of white in this position, but

note the sharpness of the division between the light underparts and the dark band along the upper flanks: Great Northern Divers usually appear more streaked and mottled along the upper flanks. Note also the indentation of white toward the rear flanks, which would correspond to the white 'thigh-patch' often shown by swimming Black-throats (see *Brit. Birds* 71: 225-226).

DIFFUSE DARK STRIPE
↓ DOWN NAKE AND MIDDLE
OF HIND-NECK.

(GREAT NORTHERN DIVER
(IMMATURE?)).

GREAT NORTHERN DIVER

REAR OF HEAD &
NECK QUITE LIGHT
FAWN BROWN AND
PATCHY SLIGHTLY
DARKER AREA ON
SIDES OF HEAD DIFFUSE
AND NOT CLEARLY
DEFINED

(GREAT-NORTHERN DIVER
(adult))

VERY CONTRASTY PLUMAGE - CROWN, NAKE AND HIND NECK VERY DARK
SEPIA WITH LITTLE VARIATION IN TONE: - IRREGULAR LINE OF DIVISION
BETWEEN LIGHT AND DARK EYE PROMINENT WITHIN PALE ORBITAL AREA
DARK (BLACKISH?) BILL WITH LIGHTER TIP SOME TRACES OF SUMMER
PLUMAGE ON SHOULDERS AND LOWER SCAPULARS.

By no stretch of the imagination does the bird in the photograph possess the sheer bulk and massiveness of the average Great Northern; its proportions appear to be much closer to those of Black-throated. The plumage closely matches that of a typical Black-throated and differs in the listed respects from Great Northern. Indeed, only the head shape is at variance with what most field guides have to say about Black-throated. In my

LIGHT FLESHY LEGS
TO FEET DARK TILES.

PROMINENT DARK TIP
TO BLUE-GREY BILL.

NECK RATHER THICK NECK (SWIMMING WHEN FEARED)
AND LOW SHAPED HEAD

(CONTRAST THAN THE BLACK THROATED AT LOW ARCHERKE 12.5.1971)

Rather thick-set with head somewhat of a rounded front.
Narrower. Rather steep forehead with slight peak at front of head.
Grey head and neck, shading darker toward forehead and eyes.
Clean white throat a check with sharp division between light
and dark along eye line. No pale orbital area. Border at
rear check less well defined more diffuse.

We have been examining many photographs of divers for an identification paper which we are preparing for *British Birds*. We consider that the excellent photograph published in volume 64 of *British Birds* (plate 77b), although captioned as a Great Northern, actually depicts a Black-throated Diver.

S. C. MADGE and R. H. APPLEBY

1 Caudle Hill, Fairburn, Knottingley, West Yorkshire WF11 9JQ

Since the receipt of these letters, Lars Svensson (*in litt.*) has pointed out that the reidentification of this diver as Black-throated was proposed in 1975 by Martin Schwarz (*Om. Mitt.* 27: 237). Eds

Underwings of Little Auk and Puffin D. Braithwaite (*Brit. Birds* 72: 344-345) suggested that differences in underwing colour between winter-plumaged Little Auks *Alle alle* and Puffins *Fratercula arctica* provided a useful

means of separating them in the field. Since the Little Auk's underwing would be difficult to observe in the field, owing to the fast wing-beat and the fact that the wings barely rise above the horizontal in normal flight, I suspect that, if one could see this feature clearly, then one could identify the species by more obvious characters. In 1979/80, several Little Auks wintered in the Weymouth area of Dorset. Other observers, including M. Cade and G. Walbridge, and I considered the underwing difficult to see in the field, and when it was seen it did not appear unduly dark. A. M. Taylor examined ciné film of Spitsbergen Little Auks and concluded that their underwings did not appear dark brown. I agree that the underwings of both species are not well illustrated in modern field guides, but suggest that the examples quoted by DB were meant as thumbnail sketches rather than accurate plumage portraits. I possess the wings of two Little Auks and one Puffin and find very little difference in their undersides. The former's wing is as follows:

primaries pale silver-brown, similar to underwing of juvenile Starling *Sturnus vulgaris*; secondaries paler, broadly tipped white; the only dark feathers being a zone of underwing-coverts about 3 mm wide extending from axillaries to carpal joint.

The Handbook describes the Little Auk's underwing as 'axillaries dark brown, underwing coverts pale brown usually more or less dull white'; and the Puffin's as 'axillaries dark brown, underwing coverts hoary brown'. This represents a rather slight difference in the field. Had DB not examined skins, I should have been tempted to suggest that the dark appearance of the Little Auk's underwing was due to retinal image retention of the dark upperwing contrasting with the white body because of the speed of the wing-beat. I am, however, at a loss to explain the differences in our findings.

M. ROGERS

Portland Bird Observatory and Field Centre, Old Lower Light, Portland, Dorset

My photograph of a dead Little Auk in winter plumage (plate 213) clearly shows white on the underwing: as a slight underwing-bar formed by light tips to the median underwing-coverts and pure white lesser underwing-coverts near the shoulder. The outer lesser underwing-coverts and outer marginal underwing-coverts have whitish tips, giving a very mottled effect.

213. Corpse of Little Auk *Alle alle* showing underwing pattern (Keith Brockie)



This was illustrated by L. Jonsson (1978, *Birds of Sea and Coast*), but I do not think it would show up on the closed wings of museum skins, although the mottling was present on some specimens that DB examined.

KEITH BROCKIE

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I feel that underwing colour is not a very good feature for separating Puffin and Little Auk in the field. After reading DB's note, I paid particular attention to the underwing colouring of Puffins breeding at Filey Brigg, North Yorkshire. All but the closest ones had dark underwings contrasting with the belly; the underwing can be seen only when the birds wheel (as shown in my drawing), since in level flight the wing-beats are shallow and



very fast. On close inspection, the underwing appears grey with a dark central bar bordered by two paler bars, but this was seen only when the Puffins landed and held up their wings. The Puffin's underwing is almost black on the coverts and paler on the primaries and secondaries. On the edge of the forewing is a white bar, and the trailing edge of the secondaries, on the upperwing, is very pale; but, as stated by DB, these cannot be seen on the underwing. The underwing 'bar' in Little Auk, noted by L. Jonsson (1978), is illustrated in a photograph in *Birds of the World* (1969, vol. 4). The underwing is, I believe, not a feature to separate the two species in the field, although there may be a difference in the hand.

P. J. DUNN

25 Wreyfield Drive, Scarborough, North Yorkshire

Although the Puffin's underwing is whitish, as DB described, it is in fact marbled with grey shading and in dull light can look quite dusky. No doubt this would not give the contrast recalling the Green Sandpiper *Tringa ochropus* of Little Auk, but it could easily mislead observers unaware of how dark Puffins can appear on the underwing. Puffins never seem as white on the underwing as does either Razorbill *Alca torda* or Guillemot *Uria aalge*.

S. C. MADGE

1 Caudle Hill, Fairburn, Knottingley, West Yorkshire WF11 9JQ

Between us, we possess a spread and mounted wing of both Puffin and Little Auk. The underside of the former is pale grey-brown with a silvery sheen on all flight feathers and greater coverts; primary coverts are a little paler. The Little Auk's is just a little darker overall and, apart from the white-tipped secondaries, differs noticeably only in the rather diffuse wide dark band along the leading edge inboard of the carpal joint (plate 214). Inspection of skins at the British Museum (Natural History) and Merseyside County Museum showed our specimens to be in no way atypical: no Little Auk underwing was 'dark brown' or approached the dull uniform brown of the Green Sandpiper, with which DB compared the species in the field. Although Little Auks appeared to average a little darker than Puffins, the overlap seemed considerable and we find it difficult to believe that this feature could be used to separate the two species at sea. The dark inner leading edge is more conspicuous and constant, but even this seems a fine point, likely to show in the field, if at all, only at ranges which would render better-known characters amply visible. This last feature proved difficult to see in conventional cabinet skins and it would seem worthwhile for collections to hold a small proportion prepared with one wing outstretched



214. Underwings of Little Auk *Alle alle* and Puffin *Fratercula arctica* (William J. Sutherland & Duncan J. Brooks)

(as some American museums do); if necessary, the spread wing might be detached for storage. Such specimens would greatly facilitate the study of secondary and covert moult, as well as reveal plumage on both surfaces. Wing patterns, particularly of less common species, seem often to be poorly illustrated in field guides and perhaps the Golden Plover *Pluvialis apricaria* would not have languished so long without its wing-bar had such skins been readily available.

WILLIAM J. SUTHERLAND and DUNCAN J. BROOKS
Department of Biology, Liverpool Polytechnic, Byrom Street, Liverpool L3 3AF

It is apparent that my note was misleading. Both the text and my illustration would indicate that the Puffin shows a pale underwing in the field. This is not so; how could it be with a short-winged, quick-flying seabird? I apologise for this error. It does not, however, invalidate my main point, to document a striking feature of Little Auk: the very dark underwing, hitherto little mentioned and often erroneously depicted. It is worth noting that this appears black in the field and contrasts with the white belly, thereby recalling Green Sandpiper.

DAVE BRAITHWAITE
Ravensdene, 42 Nunnery Lane, York

With the photographic evidence (plates 213 & 214), this correspondence is now closed. Eds

'Big Jake Calls the Waders' This new disc/cassette is even more original than Dr J. T. R. Sharrock ('News and comment', *Brit. Birds* 73: 268-269) supposed. The sounds we hear indeed originated in the vocal apparatus of 'Big Jake' Ward, but were subsequently 'engineered' by Alan Haven who 'polished' them electronically using equalisers, limiters, noise gates and other wizardry, as was pointed out in radio review on the BBC's *The Living*

World on 20th April 1980. Mr Haven, with astounding skill, using his field experience as well as recordings of real birds as models, matched the human mimicry as closely as possible to reality. He has given us the equivalent in sound of the field guide paintings: no confusing backgrounds and direct comparability. This is not to belittle the contribution of 'Big Jake'. Between them, the two men have given us a new genus of bird sound gramophone record.

JEFFERY BOSWALL

Birdswell, Wraxall, Bristol BS19 1JZ

Rarities Committee news and announcements

P. J. Grant and the Rarities Committee

The committee's annual meeting was held at Blunham, Bedfordshire, on 29th March 1980. The value of Dr J. T. R. Sharrock's membership, which provides a direct editorial link in the production of the annual report and the publication of other committee-related items, was recognised in a unanimous vote that he should remain on the committee, and not retire as the longest-serving member on 31st March 1980 as would otherwise have been the case. The automatic retirement this year thus fell to G. A. Williams, whose membership since 1975 has been a great asset, especially because of his knowledge of the birdwatching scene in Wales. His place was taken by D. J. Britton who, as previously announced (*Brit. Birds* 73: 234), was successful in the recent election for a new member. Production of the report for 1979 is currently on schedule for publication in the November issue.

ELECTION OF NEW MEMBER

Nominations are invited to fill the next vacancy, which will arise on or before 31st March 1981: they should be sent to me by 31st December 1980. The committee's nomination is R. F. Porter whose expertise in identification—especially of raptors—is widely acknowledged.

FACT SHEET AND REVISED RARITY REPORT FORM

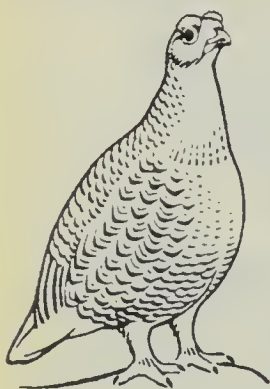
A fact sheet detailing the formation, operation and aims of the committee, and supplies of a revised and improved record form for rarities, are now available from the honorary secretary, on receipt of a SAE.

'CALL ONLY' RECORDS

There is an apparently widespread false impression, presumably arising from an earlier announcement (*Brit. Birds* 70: 308), that the committee does not consider any rarity identifications which are based mainly or entirely on call. The committee confirms its interest in such records, and will continue to judge each one on its merits. Obviously, records of species with particularly distinctive calls, with which the observer is very familiar, stand a better chance of acceptance.

P. J. Grant, 14 Heathfield Road, Ashford, Kent TN24 8QD

Announcements



'BB'-Sunbird Tour of Israel 30th March to 13th April 1981

As an extension of our services to *BB* readers, we have made arrangements for a special birdwatching trip. We are offering subscribers the chance to join a small party of like-minded birders on a spring visit to Israel, currently the most highly rated country for watching spring



migration in the Middle East and perhaps the entire Western Palearctic. The party will be led by Mark Beaman and Dr J. T. R. Sharrock and will be limited to not more than 15 other participants, each of whom must be a subscriber to *British Birds* or be a close relative accompanying a subscriber. The emphasis will be on obtaining good views of the birds seen and improving field skills, rather than merely amassing a huge list.

Experts and beginners will be equally welcome: the only requirements are a love of birding and a sense of fun. The party will be visiting the Negev Desert, Sinai, the Dead Sea, Jerusalem and, of course, Elat, all at the time of the usual peak of northbound migration. In addition to local specialities such as Reef and Green Herons, Sand Partridge, White-eyed Gull, Lichtenstein's, Crowned and Spotted Sandgrouse, Little Green Bee-eater, Rock Martin, Arabian Warbler, Tristram's Grackle, Fan-tailed Raven, Orange-tufted Sunbird and Dead Sea Sparrow, there will be a chance to see high numbers of birds of prey and other migrants ranging from Caspian Plover to Bonelli's Warbler.

All arrangements are being handled by Sunbird Holidays and any proceeds will go entirely to *British Birds* to assist in providing an even better journal. For full details of the tour, please contact Sunbird Holidays, Executive Travel (Holidays) Ltd, 141 Sloane Street, London SW1X 9BJ (phone 01-730 6609).

Postal auction of cover design The original, unframed drawing of this month's cover design will be sold to the reader who sends the highest postal (or telegram) bid received by the last day of this month (unless the highest bid does not reach the artist's reserve price). The person making the successful bid will be informed and will be expected to supply, by return post, a cheque/PO for the sum bid, plus postage. The artist will receive 80% and *British Birds* will retain 20%. Send your name, address and telephone number and your bid (no money at this stage) to: September Cover Bid, Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3NJ.

Back issues The following back issues are available, price £2.00 each: 1976 February, June, August to November; 1977 January to April, June to December, index; 1978 all issues, index; 1979 January to September,

November, December, index; 1980 all issues to date. Send orders, with cheque or postal order payable to British Birds, to Mrs Erika Sharrock, Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3NJ.

Autumn Field Ornithology Conference in Limerick Joint Irish Wildbird Conservancy (North Munster Branch) and BTO conference will be held at Cruise's Hotel, Limerick, during 24th-26th October 1980. Cost (accommodation, food and conference fee) IR£33.50 per person. Booking forms obtainable from Phil Brennan, 134 Tredaree Court, Shannon, Co. Clare, Ireland.

BOU Autumn Scientific Meeting The date for this was incorrectly given in 'Diary dates' (*Brit. Birds* 73: 266); the correct date is 8th November.

Requests

Sparrowhawks in Hertfordshire In the past two or three years, there has been a marked increase in the number of reports of Sparrowhawks *Accipiter nisus* in Hertfordshire and other eastern English counties. To document the recovery since the population crash of the 1960s, unpublished post-1970 records (especially of breeding) in Hertfordshire, with grid references if possible, are requested by Richard Webb, 109 Bearton Road, Hitchin, Hertfordshire.

Colour-marked Little Gulls The Durham and South Lancashire Ringing Groups are studying the Little Gulls *Larus minutus* which are visiting Britain in increasing numbers (see *Brit. Birds* 71: 563-582). The gulls are being ringed with either a blue or a yellow colour ring, and some are being dyed yellow on either the breast or the rump. Any reports of sightings of these birds with details of where, when, colour of ring or position of dye, and the size of the flock will be gratefully received by Dr A. H. N. Roberts, 110 Hawksworth Lane, Guiseley, Leeds, W. Yorkshire LS20 8NR.

News and comment

Peter Conder and Mike Everett

New DG for NCC The Nature Conservancy Council, with the approval of the Secretary of State for the Environment, Mr Michael Heseltine, has appointed Dick Steele as its new Director General following the retirement on 1st April 1980 of Bob Boote CVO. Mr Steele, who took up his appointment on 1st July, is 51, and was previously the head of the division of scientific services at the Institute of Terrestrial Ecology. He spent his early years in East Africa before joining the Nature Conservancy (as it was then called); between 1963 and 1973, he created and led a woodland management section. From 1973 to 1978, he was head of the section in NERC with responsibility for the terrestrial and freshwater life sciences.

withdrawal of DDT has been made by the RSPB. The dangers of pesticides such as DDT and other organochlorine pesticides were recognised over 15 years ago and successive British governments have accepted the need to restrict their use. Yet the Royal Commission cited evidence which indicated that the use of organochlorine pesticides has been increasing since 1974.

Scientists studying Sparrowhawks *Accipiter nisus* in Scotland and northern England have noticed again the failure of many eggs to hatch and of many pairs to breed successfully. Associated with this are increasing residues of DDE (a derivative of DDT). With this reduced production of young over a wide area, the Sparrowhawk population may again decline and will certainly not be able to recolonise those parts of the south and east of Britain where they have been largely absent since the 1960s.

DDT killing again A renewed plea for the

Scientific cruise in NE Atlantic This summer, the World Wildlife Fund (together with NERC, the Irish Forest and Wildlife Service, the International Whaling Commission and other organisations) is sponsoring a three-month scientific cruise in the northeast Atlantic. The aims are to make a series of transects west of Britain and Ireland across the continental shelf to look for concentrations of whales, dolphins and seabirds and to relate these to fish concentrations and other features of the sea. From this information, it is hoped to determine densities of different species and what factors may influence them so that, in the event of heavy pollution, the British and Irish governments will have better information upon which to base any necessary action.

Prior to the cruise, a number of seabird colonies along the west coast of Britain and Ireland will be visited by expeditions to colour-dye seabirds (notably Gannets *Sula bassana*, Pullins *Fratercula arctica* and Guillemots *Uria aalge*). The colours used will vary according to each colony, but will consist of the following colours: yellow, blue, red or green. Only adult birds will be dyed. The tail of Gannets, throat and breast of auks, and the upperparts or wings of Fulmars *Fulmarus glacialis* and Kittiwakes *Rissa tridactyla* may be dyed. In order to increase the number reported, sightings of colour-marked birds should be notified to P. G. H. Evans, Edward Grey Institute, Zoology Department, South Parks Road, Oxford OX1 3PS.

Radar tracking birds at sea Ornithologists have been using radar to track the movement of birds off the northeast coast of Scotland. Experiments using radar to track birds have been going on for some years and the latest observations by Dr W. R. P. Bourne using radar at RAF Buchan, Aberdeenshire, are being incorporated into a report on birds seen in BP's Forties Field in the North Sea. Oilmen who are also ornithologists have been recording bird movements from oil installations in the North Sea and the records are being collated for the North Sea Bird Club at the Zoology Department of Aberdeen University. The NCC's 'Birds at Sea' project is sharing the same computer programme at the University.

North Sea Bird Club Since the North Sea petroleum developments involve quite a lot of lively people, there are naturally bird-

watchers among them. The first attempt to organise activities was carried out by Bryan Sage from BP headquarters in London, with a good response until he was distracted by Alaska. The BP Petroleum Development in Aberdeen independently commissioned their friendly neighbourhood university to organise recreational birdwatching on the Forties Field in the central North Sea. Alan Morley and others on the oilfield, Bill Bourne with the local radar and Alan Knox with the University Bird Club computer programme made hay for a year with results reported in the *North East Scotland Bird Report for 1978*, and on BBC's 'Nationwide' programme. Professor George Dunnet and Mrs Janet Ollason are now involved using a Canadian seabird computer programme shared with the adjacent NCC Seabird Unit, and on 22nd May a North Sea Bird Club was set up, supported by half a dozen oil companies, with David Merrie of BP in the Chair and Sam Alexander of Chevron as Secretary. They hope to produce a report for 1979 shortly. Anyone interested should get in touch with Mrs J. Ollason at the Zoology Department, Tillydrone Avenue, Aberdeen AB9 2TN. [Contributed by Dr W. R. P. Bourne]

Hampshire Ornithological Society This was another 'bird section' which thrived so well that it tore itself from the bosom of the Hampshire Field Club and Archaeological Society. Now, with 800 members, it produces an annual report and four newsletters a year for an annual subscription of £3. According to the newsletter, the population of Dartford Warblers *Sylvia undata* in the New Forest seemed to have declined from about 250 pairs in 1974 to about 70 pairs in 1979. The HOS is keeping its members very busy with its surveys of the county's interesting species: not only the Dartford Warblers, but also Stonechats *Saxicola torquata* and Wood Warblers *Phylloscopus sibilatrix*. The membership secretary is R. Cook, 70 Downs Road, South Wonston, Winchester SO21 3EW.

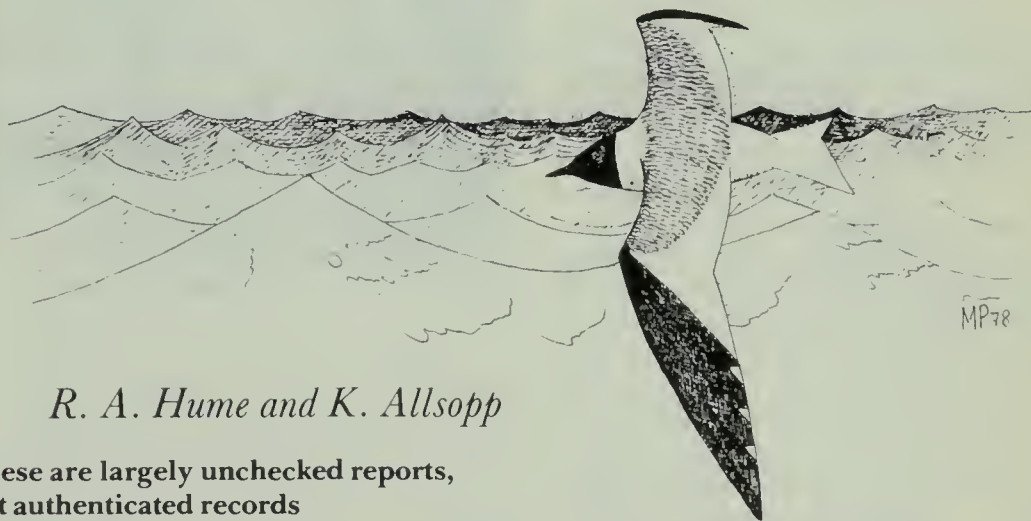
Dutch atlas Keen atlassers and anyone with any interest at all in the birds of the Netherlands will be pleased to know that the recently published breeding bird atlas of the Netherlands, *Atlas van de Nederlandse Broedvogels*, can now be obtained (price Du. fl. 34.75) from Natuurmonumenten, Noordeinde 60, 1243 JJ 's-Graveland, Netherlands.

Black Woodpeckers on our doorstep The latest issue of the French journal *L'Oiseau et la Revue Française d'Ornithologie* contains a paper by Michel Cuisin on the dramatic recent spread of the Black Woodpecker *Dryocopus martius*. Black Woodpeckers had been found in the breeding season in 75% of départements (and breeding confirmed in 46) by 1979, compared with presence in 61% (and

breeding confirmed in only 23) six years earlier. Despite many claims of British sightings in the past, none has yet been accepted and Black Woodpecker is still not on the British and Irish list. With breeding now proved in three French départements touching the Channel coast (Nord, Somme and Eure), English south coast watchers should perhaps now be on the alert . . .

Opinions expressed in this feature are not necessarily those of the editors of British Birds

Recent reports



R. A. Hume and K. Allsopp

These are largely unchecked reports, not authenticated records

All dates refer to June unless stated otherwise, though this report includes many late May and early July records.

In contrast to the dry anticyclonic weather of May, wet, chilly and cloudy conditions made for a miserable June. Throughout the month, slow-moving depressions remained close to Britain and Ireland, and cloud cover persisted for long periods. Only for two brief periods with southerly winds were temperatures more seasonal and the consequent slow development of insect populations under the cool conditions may prove to have been detrimental to bird breeding success.

Seabirds, gulls and terns

An unseasonal **Red-necked Grebe** *Podiceps grisegena* was at Abberton Reservoir (Essex) on 15th and 16th. Earlier and more exciting was a **White-billed Diver** *Gavia adamsii* off Rhum (Highland) on 28th and 29th May. The ageing **Steller's Eider** *Polysticta stelleri* still hits the pockets of the year-listers in its remote Western Isles site; a much more readily seen duck these days, the **Ring-necked Duck** *Aythya collaris* appeared at Vane Farm (Fife) in mid-month and stayed

on into July, but, being an immature drake among 500 moulting Tufted Ducks *A. fuligula*, it was far from easy to find. A **Sooty Shearwater** *Puffinus griseus* passed Filey Brigg (North Yorkshire) on 1st and there were two more on 22nd; on 25th and 26th there were many **Storm Petrels** *Hydrobates pelagicus* off north Cornwall. In misty, rough conditions on 11th, a **Little Auk** *Alle alle* sat on the sea off Filey Brigg. A **Laughing Gull** *Larus atricilla* stayed on the Hayle Estuary (Cornwall) from 21st until it was found dead in early July, when a **Franklin's Gull** *L. pipixcan* turned up at Irvine (Strathclyde). Another Nearctic gull which has become of annual occurrence but once was rare is the **Ring-billed Gull** *L. delawarensis*. one appeared at Belmullet (Mayo) from 1st. With it on 8th were two **Mediterranean Gulls** *L. melanocephalus*; two more were at Sandymount (Dublin) at the same time. Ireland had only 22 records before the end of 1978, but there have been 19 since. Up to seven occurred at Sandwich Bay (Kent) during the month. A hybrid **Glaucous** × **Herring Gull** *L. hyperboreus* × *L. argentatus*, paired with a Herring, was sitting on eggs on

Great Saltee (Wexford), but all subsequently disappeared. In early July, a **Sabine's Gull** *L. sabini* was at Sheringham (Norfolk) and a **Gull-billed Tern** *Gelochelidon nilotica* helped itself to eggs and chicks of Little Terns *Sterna albifrons* at Titchwell (Norfolk). A **White-winged Black Tern** *Chlidonias leucopterus* visited Hickling Broad (Norfolk) on 9th.

Wading birds

There was a **Night Heron** *Nycticorax nycticorax* at Farlington Marshes (Hampshire) on 29th and **Little Egrets** *Egretta garzetta* at Sandwich Bay on 8th, Northward Hill (Kent) on 14th and at East Tilbury (Essex) between early May and at least 29th. A **Black Stork** *Ciconia nigra* must have been a magnificent sight at Southminster (Essex) on 25th May. Two **Glossy Ibises** *Plegadis falcinellus*, presumably from Stodmarsh (Kent), were on Sheppey (Kent) at the end of June, and a **Black-winged Stilt** *Himantopus himantopus* which joined them may well have been one which had been at Great Wakering (Essex) from 8th. Dungeness (Kent) had 70 **Avocets** *Recurvirostra avosetta* on 14th and **Kentish Plovers** *Charadrius alexandrinus* occurred at Perry Oaks (London) on 1st and at Sandwich Bay, with two there in June and two more in July. The rarest wader was an earlier report of a claimed **Slender-billed Curlew** *Numenius tenuirostris* from Luddenham (Kent).

Small migrants

Woodchat Shrikes *Lanius senator* were seen on Alderney (Channel Islands) on 25th May and at Sizewell and a Breckland site (both Suffolk) for a few days from 15th. A **Lesser Grey Shrike** *L. minor* was at Herne Bay



(Kent) on 5th and **Red-backed Shrikes** *L. collurio* were at Sandwich on 2nd and on Fetlar (Shetland), where there were four between 8th and 14th. An **Alpine Swift** *Apus melba* carcassed over Northward Hill on 3rd May. Two more **Red-rumped Swallows** *Hirundo daurica* appeared, at Filey Brigg on 18th May and Stansted (Essex) on 31st May. In a good year for late spring **Icterine Warblers** *Hippolais icterina*, individuals were noted at Bamburgh (Northumberland) on 25th May and at Sandwich Bay on 14th with another on 15th. A reported Marsh Warbler *Acrocephalus palustris* near Cambridge during June and July also turned out to be an excellent singing Icterine. A genuine **Marsh Warbler** was trapped on Fetlar on 18th. **Bluethroats** *Luscinia svecica* were found near Tynemouth (Tyne & Wear) on 12th and 25th May and on Fetlar, which generally had a poor spring for migrants, on 18th May. Another **Two-barred Crossbill** *Loxia leucoptera* was found at Santon Warren (Suffolk) on 7th. Awaiting confirmation is a **Little Bunting** *Emberiza pusilla* on Guernsey (Channel Islands) on 8th May, a first for that attractive island if accepted.

Raptors

Migrant **Marsh Harriers** *Circus aeruginosus* remained widespread, and the occasional **Montagu's Harrier** *C. pygargus* was noted too. A **Honey Buzzard** *Pernis apivorus* was washed up dead on a Fetlar beach on 17th and a live one passed over Sandwich Bay on

8th. With some controversy over an earlier falcon on the Isles of Scilly still not resolved, but with **Lanner** *Falco biarmicus* implicated, another Lanner was claimed at Neston (Cheshire) on 7th.

Long-stay rarities

Apart from the Steller's Eider already mentioned, the **Belted Kingfisher** *Ceryle alcyon* was still to be seen in Cornwall in July, as was the **Scops Owl** *Otus scops* in Hampshire. Three female **Snowy Owls** *Nyctea scandiaca* on Fetlar in May gradually declined to one by the end of June.

Latest news

In first half August, **Melodious Warblers** *Hippolais polyglotta* at Portland (Dorset) and Prawle Point (Devon), where **Rufous Bush Robin** *Cercotrichas galactotes* on 9th. **Aquatic Warbler** *Acrocephalus paludicola* at Sandwich Bay; earlier, Bardsey had had **Melodious Warbler** and two **Woodchat Shrikes**. Influx of shearwaters and other seabirds to Porthgwarra (Cornwall), including 480 **Cory's Shearwaters** *Calonectris diomedea* and **Long-tailed Skua** *Stercorarius longicaudus* on 11th and 1,050 **Cory's** with 9,000 **Manx Shearwaters** *Puffinus puffinus* on 12th.

Reviews

The Natural History of Shetland. By R. J. Berry and J. L. Johnston. Collins, London, 1980. 380 pages. 16 black-and-white and 8 colour plates; several maps; 47 line-drawings. £8.50.

Shetland is a long way from London; even Edinburgh is farther from Lerwick than is the west coast of Norway. It is this isolation which makes Shetland a magnet—though birds help! This latest 'New Naturalist' is, to me, something different from recent volumes. The authors, by putting systematic lists of everything from marine algae to birds in appendices, have concentrated on the job of communicating. The style of writing and the treatment of the various subjects are thoughtful, well presented and just downright readable.

In some books in this series, one feels that the author was writing for a post-graduate group rather than for ordinary people, and this is often reflected by the first few chapters being unnecessarily 'heavy'. In this book, even that most difficult of subjects, geology, is treated in an enlightened way and you are not left struggling about which Age you are supposed to be in. As you may expect, there are chapters on vegetation, land and marine mammals, the sea, and birds. There is some fascinating information in all these, such as that the vegetation in the islands is affected by man's grazing animals and not by wind and salt. Or that the fieldmouse came in with the Vikings, 1,200 years ago, and have evolved differences since then.

The birds are covered in three chapters: terrestrial birds, seabirds and a final chapter for the birds of Fair Isle. The birds, therefore, have a major part in the book (quite rightly, says I) and there is a comprehensive table of breeding birds which covers not only status and distribution but also the Shetland name (isn't 'dunter' much nicer than eider?). There is also a fascinating table which compares the species nesting in Shetland, Orkney, the Faeroes, Caithness and so on.

There are other, equally fascinating chapters covering man's history in these northern isles. Shetland naturalists, the effect of oil and, finally, conservation. This last chapter is written in a very sensitive way and illustrates all too clearly that the environment of Shetland is fragile and that the oil industry, in spite of its assurances, is bringing problems, some of which may be catastrophic. The local people will have to be extra vigilant if the Shetland they know is to survive.

If you have been to Shetland, intend going to Shetland or just enjoy reading about exciting islands, then this is a book which you must get.

FRANK HAMILTON

Form and Function in Birds. vol. 1. Edited by A. S. King & J. McLelland. Academic Press, London, 1979. 470 pages; 144 figures, including monochrome photographs and line-drawings. £28.00.

This is the first of three volumes planned to cover the field. It contains seven chapters, each by a different author, on the following subjects: avian morphology, coelomic cavities, digestive system, urinary organs, female genital organs (but not male in this volume), blood cells, and the autonomic nervous system. Each chapter is self-contained, with its own references: the

number of these varies from chapter to chapter, but is extensive, there being some 57 pages of references in all.

The text is intended to 'become a major reference source for vertebrate zoologists and physiologists, for pathologists and anatomists . . .'. From this and the chapter titles, the reader will realise that this is a high-level textbook which is not intended for the general reader. Further, it may be noted that the authors are primarily anatomists; consequently, field biologists may not find the book particularly useful for them. To me, at any rate, the 'form' in this work comes out more strongly than the 'function'. To quote but two examples, there is a chapter on coelomic cavities, but rather little on respiration; there is a little on taste buds (there is said to be more on their structure in a section on special sense organs, a section which does not seem to occur in this volume), but the reader is referred to other works for the sense of taste in birds. This may sound a little critical. In fact, it is a reflection of my interests as much as on the authors of this work. I stress it because I suspect that the majority of readers of *British Birds* may, like myself, find this work a bit outside their normal field.

For the serious anatomist, however, or the scientist interested in following up a specific anatomical feature, the work is obviously a gold mine. All the chapters in the book are clearly written and well—indeed, often outstandingly well—illustrated. A further feature which I found particularly welcome is that a certain amount of evolutionary background and comparison with mammals and reptiles is to be found in most chapters.

In short, this is a highly detailed, highly specialised work which will fill a much needed want in major libraries.

CHRISTOPHER PERRINS

The Bird-watcher's Guide to the Wetlands of Britain. By M. A. Ogilvie. Batsford, London, 1979. 189 pages; 20 black-and-white illustrations; 6 maps. £4.50.

As one involved in the management of land subject to increasing pressure from visitors, this reviewer might, perhaps excusably, be expected to look upon the publication of yet another guide which will almost certainly bring even greater numbers with something much less than enthusiasm, more so when the habitat involved is the one attracting more, by a very considerable factor, than any other. Were the author not known to have strong feelings for, and to be dedicated to, the preservation of wetlands (as well as other habitats), he might perhaps have deserved censure for further publicising such sensitive areas. The view, however, that the more who know and love wetlands the better the chance of mustering effective support for their preservation is a reasonable one, and publicity resulting in this must, in these days of the big battalions, be the lesser of the evils.

The layout of the book is neat and tidy, starting with regional maps showing the sites discussed, followed by a general discussion on wetlands, a short note briefly outlining the distribution, status, numbers and habitat requirements of each of the three swan, seven geese, 18 duck and 21 wader species which breed in or visit the British Isles throughout the year, and then a county-by-county gazetteer of the sites chosen for inclusion.

The style of writing is clear and felicitous, perhaps because the limited size of the book dictated succinctness, which is all to the good—more publishers might take the same line with advantage to readers. Since the book is a guide, it is well that the geographical descriptions are clear and, without being able to do an exhaustive check, apparently accurate, since the regional maps in such a format can do little other than give a general indication of the location of a site. Sadly, the book has its shortcomings. A purchaser might be excused for feeling that the layout of the many bird lists is wasteful of space. The photographs (16 pages of them) are generally poor, both in terms of subject and of reproduction. There are some site omissions, for instance both Havergate, Suffolk, and Elmley, Kent, support larger populations than a number of the sites mentioned, and Fairburn deserves better than the dismissive note it gets. Frankly, the book gives the distinct impression of being a pot-boiler and I think the author's friends and admirers deserve something better of one with his background and knowledge.

Despite these criticisms, and the ambivalent attitude of this reviewer to books such as this, it will almost certainly become a valuable item of the equipment, particularly of the less knowledgeable birdwatcher as well as of the newcomer to the art and pastime, and it is hoped it will engender in those who use it a love of this attractive but diminishing habitat, resulting in an increase in support for its continuing and increased protection.

JOHN CRUDASS

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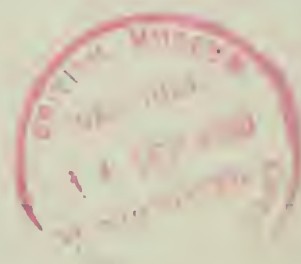
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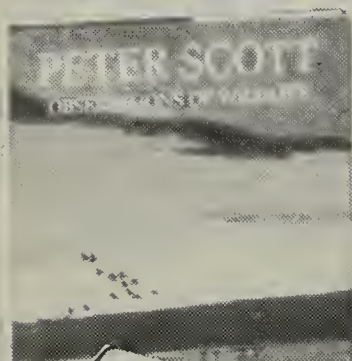
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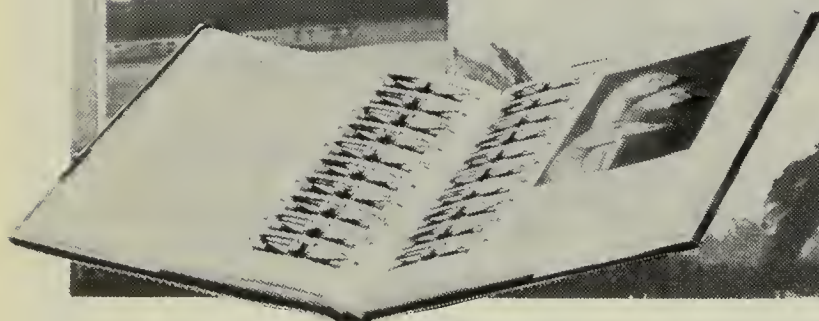
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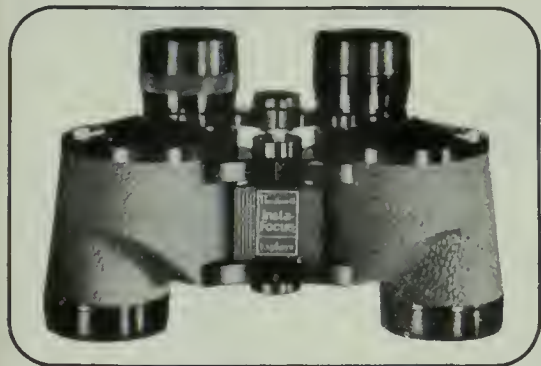
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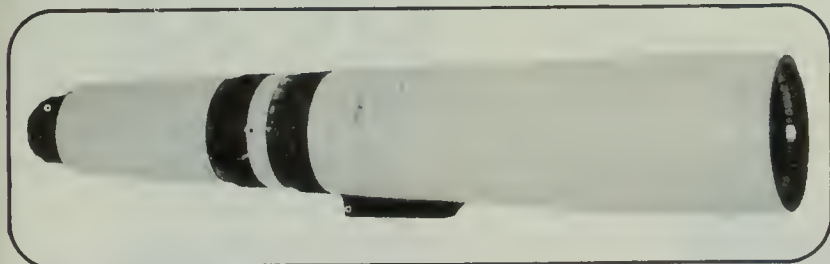
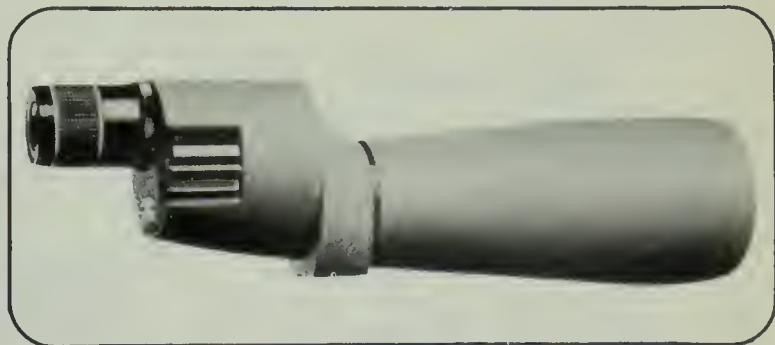
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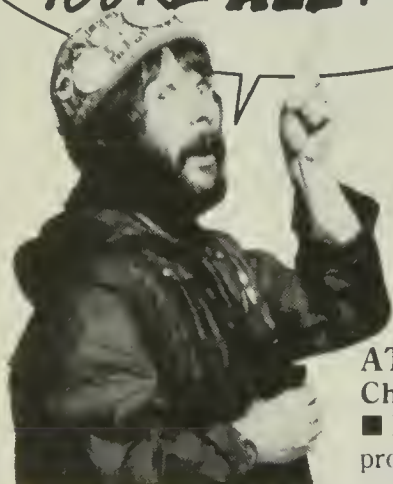
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With the support given to us, the immediate future of *BB* seems assured. In the long term, however, the only guarantee is a continuing increase in the number of subscribers. To ensure the journal's future, please resubscribe yourself, and miss no opportunity to tell other birders about *BB* and pass their names and addresses to us or persuade them to subscribe at once. It may be trite, but it is still a fact that, if every *BB* reader obtained one new subscription, the journal's circulation would double. If this happened, larger issues could be standard and subscription increases could be less frequent and smaller. We have no shortage of excellent and varied material—papers and notes—awaiting publication, so the future of *BB* could be very rosy.

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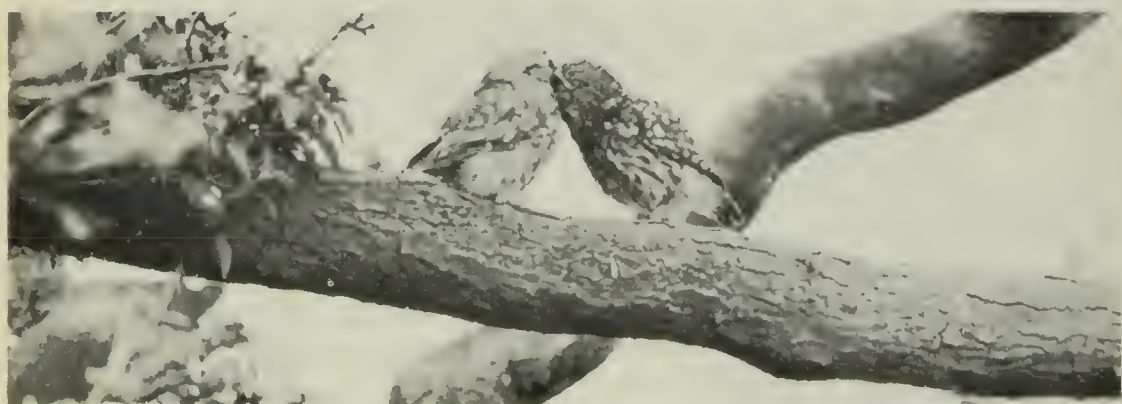
Population Ecology of Raptors. By Ian Newton. T. & A. D. Poyser, Berkhamsted. £10.80. (Review: *Brit. Birds* 73: 202)

Our very-close second choice was

Discover Birds. By D. I. M. Wallace. Whizzard Press/André Deutsch, London. £4.95. (Review: *Brit. Birds* 73: 166)

Owls allopreening in the wild

Derick Scott



A short note by F. Haverschmidt (*Brit. Birds* 71: 359-360) on one Little Owl *Athene noctua* preening another was based on observations at Heerlen in the Netherlands on 13th April 1939 and 27th March 1941. John W. Fitzpatrick (*Auk* 92: 598-599) reported what was apparently the first instance of owls allopreening in the wild: two Barred Owls *Strix varia* in Florida on 19th July 1972.

I was very surprised to find so few references to this behaviour in the literature, having personally observed several instances of allopreening by owls in the wild between 1950 and 1979. This paper documents those observations; instances of allopreening noted by other workers are also mentioned.

Personal observations

(1) On 9th June 1960, while recording prey returns at a Little Owl's nest near Goxhill in north Lincolnshire, my companion, A. D. Atkinson, and I saw the male arrive at the nest carrying an earthworm in his bill. The female was inside the nest chamber, brooding small young. For a few moments, the male remained on the edge of the hole before entering; he reappeared seconds later, minus the prey, and began to nibble his feet, which I assumed was to remove any particles of damp soil. The female then appeared from the chamber and stood beside the male. Immediately, he began to nibble her crown feathers. She responded by facing him and preening the feathers on the upper part of his breast. This behaviour of reciprocal allopreening was alternate, and lasted for about one minute, after which both owls flew off, the female returning three minutes later to continue brooding her young. No further examples of allopreening were observed at this site.

(2) On 8th March 1964, at about 22.00 GMT, I was sitting inside my car listening to a male Long-eared Owl *Asio otus* marking his territory close to one of the rides in Laughton Forest near Gainsborough, Lincolnshire. Shortly afterwards, an owl, which proved to be a female Long-eared, flew across the ride, alighted on the low branch of a conifer immediately opposite my car, and began to call. Almost at once, the male responded by wing-clapping above the tree, and then alighted on the same branch as the female.

The male slowly approached the female, and, as they faced each other, both began to roll their heads and utter soft twitterings. They then nibbled each other's crown and facial feathers, while still twittering. This was simultaneous reciprocal allopreening. Copulation followed, and movements from the male suggested that he was nibbling the back of her head and nape during copulation.

Immediately following copulation, they again faced each other and began to preen each other's breast and facial feathers. I timed this alternate reciprocal allopreening: it lasted for exactly two minutes, after which both birds left their perch to fly into the forest.

(3) On 17th May 1971, I was photographing Long-eared Owls in a north Nottinghamshire wood. The young at this nest, aged between 16 and 18 days, were not being brooded by the female. After a night of normal activity, nothing was seen of the adults until 05.55 hours, when the male began calling close by. Moments later, the female answered, and, from the conversation between the two, prey had been transferred from male to female. At 06.12 hours, the female arrived at the nest with a Skylark *Alauda arvensis*, and the biggest owlet snatched it from her. I photographed her, and she left almost immediately.

Expecting no further activity I removed my camera and flash heads to await the arrival of my companion, W. Taaffe, who was due to relieve me at 07.00. At about 06.40, however, the female alighted on the branch of a larch *Larix decidua*, 8 m above the ground and some 15 m from the nest. She peered at the hide, but then turned slightly to gaze at her young, which appeared to be asleep. She then turned until her back was towards the hide, and began to sigh, at the same time rolling her head in a clockwise direction. Seconds later, the male alighted by her side and began to preen her gently about the head and the back of her neck. At the same time, the female nibbled his upper breast feathers. Reciprocal allopreening was simultaneous, and lasted for four minutes.

In my opinion, this behaviour would have lasted much longer, but my companion's arrival disturbed the owls, the male flying deep into the wood, but the female remaining on her perch, barking at us as we removed the equipment down the scaffolding. Adverse weather conditions halted work at this nest, so further examples of allopreening were not observed.

(4) In June 1973, Hugh Palin, Frank Rippingale and I were photographing Little Owls inside a walled orchard owned by John Antcliff of Mattersey, Nottinghamshire. On the night of 12th June, FR and I were inside the hide an hour before dusk; the young being well grown, the female owl was off the nest. At 21.35 hours in fairly good light, the male Little Owl alighted on top of a high wall 10 m from the nest. He had a small mammal in his bill, which looked like a mouse *Apodemus*. Moments later, the female arrived on the wall at his side, snatched the prey from him and took it to her young. She then returned to the male on the wall. She walked up to him and lowered her head, and he began to preen her head and the back of her neck, this behaviour lasting for one minute. The female then preened the male's head for about 30



216. Little Owls *Athene noctua*, Lancashire, May 1977, female preening male (*Dennis Green*)

seconds. Then began simultaneous reciprocal allopreening with much attention around the bills, as if the bristles were being cleaned. No sounds were uttered. After about 12 minutes, both owls flew over the wall out of sight. Similar behaviour was observed on the following night, at 22.15 hours, this time for only one minute.

(5) The most prolonged example of allopreening that I have ever observed was at Lake Naivasha, Kenya, on the morning of 6th January 1979. At about 07.30 hours, my wife and I heard a low hooting close to our chalet. About 30m from our chalet, we located a pair of Verreaux's Eagle Owls *Bubo lacteus* sitting side by side in a dense conifer 15m above the ground. The owls were facing each other, and were uttering their typical call notes: 'uh, uh, uh, uh'. Song periods were brief, but, during the pauses, which varied from a few seconds to over one minute, alternate, reciprocal allopreening occurred about the face, base of the bills and above the head. My wife fetched our two companions, G. V. Adkin and W. S. Paton, and for almost an hour we watched and listened as the owls carried out almost continuous alternate, reciprocal allopreening. Due to the positions of the eagle owls among the thick foliage, and the harsh shadows caused by the bright early morning sunlight, photography was totally impractical.

Other observations

Dennis Green (*in litt.*) has reported that, between 26th May and 25th June 1977, while photographing Little Owls at Nateby, Lancashire, he observed allopreening between the adults on several occasions, usually between 09.00 and 11.00 GMT. At this site, allopreening was quite a lengthy process, mostly concentrated on the facial area, back of the head and neck, and base of the bill. Both alternate and simultaneous reciprocal allopreening lasted for as long as 20 to 30 minutes. Alternate bill-tapping—again reciprocal—always followed these long bouts of allopreening, after which the two owls would sit close together for a time before departing. Fortunately, Dennis Green was able to photograph this behaviour (plates 215-218).

Derek Bunn (*in litt.*), during his valuable fieldwork on Barn Owls *Tyto alba*, found that allopreening and reciprocal allopreening is a regular occurrence both between paired adult and between young Barn Owls. He and A. B. Warburton recorded this in a recent paper (*Brit. Birds* 70: 246-256); he and Dr Colin Harrison have recorded allopreening among captive Barn Owls; and he has seen this occur among captive Tawny Owls *Strix aluco*.



217. Pair of Little Owls *Athene noctua*, Lancashire, May 1977, immediately after female has preened male (Dennis Green)



218. Pair of Little Owls *Athene noctua*, Lancashire, May 1977, after preening male, female (right) is calling (Dennis Green)

The account of the Eagle Owl *Bubo bubo* in *The Handbook* noted that coition is usually preceded by mutual billing and fondling and interminable bowings; this surely indicates that allopreening is carried out by this species.

Discussion

Although allopreening among owls in the wild has seldom been recorded, it is quite obviously commonplace. Of course, this interesting behaviour usually occurs during the hours of darkness, when observations are either difficult or impossible.

Although most examples of allopreening have been observed during the actual breeding period, this behaviour prior to breeding, among bonded pairs of owls, probably acts as a sexual stimulus, part of the ritual of courtship display.

Summary

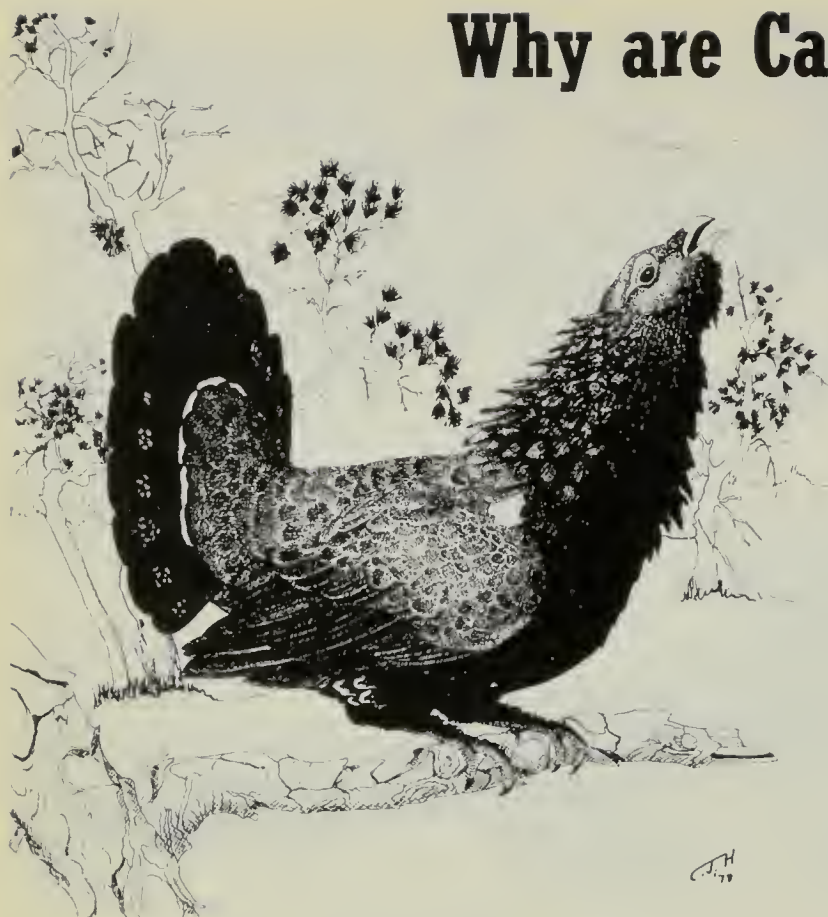
Cases are documented of allopreening in the wild by Little Owl *Athene noctua*, Long-eared Owl *Asio otus* and Verreaux's Eagle Owl *Bubo lacteus*. Other observers have also recorded this behaviour by Barn Owl *Tyto alba* and probably by Eagle Owl *Bubo bubo*, and by Tawny Owl *Strix aluco* in captivity.

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Why are Capercaillie cocks so big?



R. Moss

Chris Knights and Terry Andrewartha have taken some remarkable pictures of displaying Capercaillies *Tetrao urogallus* which illustrate an obvious question: why are cock Capercaillies so much bigger than the hens?

Body size and ecological niche

An adult cock weighs over 4 kg, a hen about 1.7 kg. His bill is also very much larger than hers and is a prominent feature in his display (plate 219). Many studies on the idea of ecological 'niches' have shown that body size in birds is closely adapted to the life-style of the species; in particular, bill size and bill shape are closely related to feeding habits (Lack 1971). We might therefore guess that cock and hen Capercaillies should eat foods which differ at least as much as the diets of, for example, cock and hen Sparrowhawks *Accipiter nisus* (Newton 1979).

In fact this is not the case. Cock and hen Capercaillies eat very similar diets, consisting largely of needles of Scots pine *Pinus sylvestris* in winter (Zwickel 1966) and a variety of other foods including bilberry *Vaccinium myrtillus* and heather *Calluna vulgaris* in summer. Although hens tend to occupy denser parts of a forest than cocks (Seiskari 1962), it seems unlikely that such a minor difference in ecological niches could explain such a major sexual difference in body size. The inference from this appears a paradox: either cock Capercaillies are too big for their ecological niche, or hen Capercaillies are too small for theirs.

Surprisingly, the scanty evidence available confirms this suggestion: cock Capercaillies may be too big. Data from Norway (Wegge 1979) and preliminary results from Scotland (fig. 1) indicate that, in years when

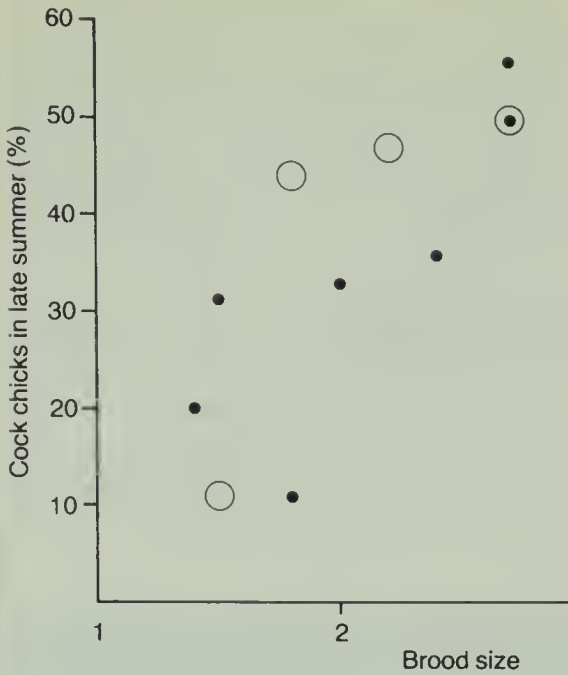


Fig. 1. % cock chicks in broods of Capercaillies *Tetrao urogallus* and brood sizes (chicks per hen, excluding barren hens) in late summer in south Norway (dots, copied from Wegge 1979) and Glen Tanar, Grampian, Scotland (open circles, 1976-9). Tendency for % of cocks to decrease with decreasing brood size statistically significant at 1% level (combining probabilities (Fisher 1950) from Spearman rank correlation coefficients for the two studies)

broods are small, cock Capercaillie chicks suffer heavier mortality than hen chicks. If further study confirms this, a reasonable explanation might start from the fact that cock Capercaillies have to grow more than the hens to reach their autumn weight. Hence, more cocks should die as chicks in years when broods are small and cock chicks are presumably under greater stress than hens. The nature of the presumed stress causing chicks to die is not known, but an obvious suggestion is poor food (Wegge 1979): this is possibly worse in years when the weather is colder and wetter than usual (Slagsvold & Grasaas 1979). Bad weather on its own is an unlikely cause of differential mortality between cock and hen chicks: the ratio of surface area to total volume is greater in the relatively small hen chicks and, hence, they should suffer relatively greater heat loss than the cocks. Cold, wet weather

219. Capercaillies *Tetrao urogallus*, cock A and his harem (note relative sizes of cock's and hen's bills), Grampian, May 1977 (C. R. Knights & T. Andrewartha)



should therefore kill more hens than cocks (so long as the food is adequate) and this is the opposite of what is observed.

Interestingly, only two cock chicks, but 17 hen chicks, were seen in Glen Tanar, Grampian, in August 1977 (the year of the smallest broods there, fig. 1) and one cock was smaller than his sister while the other was no bigger. Usually, cocks of this age are much larger than their sisters, both in the wild and in captivity.

Even if the suggestion that cock chicks sometimes survive less well than the hens is confirmed, it fails to explain why cocks have evolved the seeming disadvantage of big size. The obvious answer is that there is some compensating advantage in being big, and the photographs of a cock surrounded by hens crouching to invite copulation (plate 220) give a strong hint as to what this might be. Perhaps big cocks have evolved because hens preferred them. A first step toward testing this idea is to ask if hens do prefer particular cocks.



220. Capercaillies *Tetrao urogallus*, hens crouching to invite copulation, Grampian, May 1977
(C. R. Knights & T. Andrewartha)

Choice of mate

There are several descriptions of Capercaillie display grounds in the literature and they differ considerably. Nonetheless, all agree that several cocks often gather together at a traditional site in the forest, where they display, sing and fight for a few weeks in the spring. Such sites are often in a relatively open part of the forest and on the top or side of a hill.

The remarkable song of the cock Capercaillie is delivered with great vigour and with the aid of a part of his oesophagus that inflates like a toy balloon. Such inflatable organs are generally considered an aid to noise production and it has seemed paradoxical that a singing Capercaillie can scarcely be heard by a human listener at a distance of 200m. It appears, however, that the song includes a low infrasonic growling note which cannot be heard by human ears but which may be detectable by other Capercaillies at a distance of more than 200m (Moss & Lockie 1979).

Several species of grouse have communal displays and most observers think that there is usually a 'master cock' which tends to occupy the central position on the display ground and to mate with the majority of the hens that attend for this purpose. This kind of observation is usually rationalised by saying that the master cock is dominant over other cocks, and that hens prefer him for this reason. There is, however, an element of circularity in this explanation, as no unambiguous measure of dominance usually exists that is independent of the individual's location on the display ground and independent of the number of his matings. An additional complication is that not all displaying groups of cocks conform to this pattern (Johnstone 1969; Hjorth 1979).

The Capercaillie is perhaps the least formally organised of the communally displaying gamebirds. The Blackcock *Tetrao tetrix* is more typical: each Blackcock has his own well-demarcated territory to which he returns each morning. Territory boundaries are usually well defined and are the same morning after morning. In such cases one may ask: do hens prefer the master cock because he is the best cock, or because he occupies the central territory?

Three cocks attended regularly at the display ground where Chris Knights and Terry Andrewartha took notes and photographs; from lack of imagination, we called them A, B and C (fig. 2). Other cocks were seen occasionally. Cock A was invariably surrounded by hens, up to 15 on one morning (table 1); although B and C displayed vigorously, they usually attracted no hens. The sketch map illustrates how A, B and C were dispersed on a typical morning, but this was by no means the same every morning. For example, B often displayed on ground that A occupied on other mornings or at other times on the same morning. On occasion, A walked out of sight, with all the hens following him, well away from his usual display area. Evidently, they were more interested in A than in any particular piece of ground.

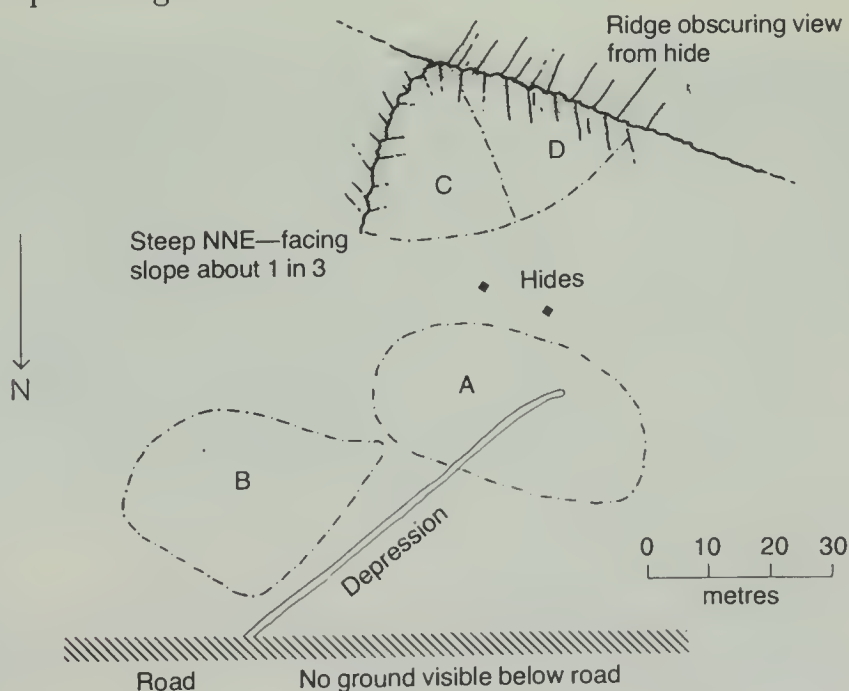


Fig. 2. Sketch map of Capercaillie *Tetrao urogallus* display ground Glen Tanar, Grampian, 1977

Table 1. Calendar of observations of Capercaillies *Tetrao urogallus* at a display ground at Glen Tanar, Grampian, in 1977

* = including four in trees. Compiled from notes by T. Andrewartha, C. R. Knights, R. Moss and D. Watt.

Date	Cock A	Cock B	Cock C	Cock D	Total hens
April 23	A beat B 8 hens	present	present	not seen	12*
April 24	A beat B and C 12 hens 2 copulations	present	present	not seen	12
April 25	11 hens	present	not seen	not seen	11
April 26	A beat B 15 hens 2 copulations	present	2 copulations (on A's ground)	present	15
April 27	A beat B 12 hens 4 copulations	present	present	not seen	12
April 28	5 hens 2 copulations	present	not seen	not seen	5
April 29	5 hens	2 hens (briefly)	present	not seen	5
April 30	A chased C 5 hens 2 copulations	2 hens (briefly)	present	not seen	7
May 1	present	present	not seen	not seen	0

The hens surrounded A in a dense crowd (plate 221). They often chased, displayed at and pecked one another (plates 222 & 223), while competing to get close to him. Sometimes, a disputing hen adopted the same posture as a displaying cock, with head and neck held vertically, beard erect, and with tail raised and fanned. As A sang and displayed, some of the hens in front of him squatted in the pre-copulatory posture. He would then strut past them,

221. Capercaillies *Tetrao urogallus*, hens crowding in front of cock, Grampian, May 1977 (C. R. Knights & T. Andrewartha)





222 & 223. Capercaillies *Tetrao urogallus*, hens sparring in front of cock, Grampian, May 1977 (C. R. Knights & T. Andrewartha)



whereupon hens that had now been left behind stood up (plate 224) and ran round to the front of the crowd, to squat again, and so on in a continuing procession. Occasionally, a hen flew on to the branch of a tree to rest for a

224. Capercaillies *Tetrao urogallus*, hens standing up after cock has strutted by them, Grampian, May 1977 (C. R. Knights & T. Andrewartha)





225. Capercaillies *Tetrao urogallus*, copulation, Grampian, May 1977 (C. R. Knights & T. Andrewartha)

few minutes before returning to join the living carpet which surrounded A as he continued his regal progress.

We presumed that A was there to copulate (plate 225), but were astonished to see how few hens he actually mated in a morning. We saw a maximum of four copulations on any one morning, although there were 12 or more hens present on several mornings. We may have missed seeing a few copulations, but we are certain that A did not achieve 12 matings on any morning that we were there. Therefore, many hens left without having been mated on many mornings, presumably to try again the next day and until mated.

This seeming disinterest was all the more surprising by contrast with Black Grouse and other lekking gamebirds where a hen that invites copulation usually gets served at once. David Lack once watched a Blackcock mounting a stuffed hen Black Grouse 56 times in 45 minutes (Lack 1939). A, however, was not unique among Capercaillie. In the spring of 1967, I watched a single Capercaillie hen offering herself to a solitary displaying cock for four hours. She eventually gave up and left him displaying by himself while she flew off to feed on newly growing needles of larch *Larix*.

On a wet and miserable morning (29th April), one of the last that hens were seen in 1977, two hens did leave A and walk over towards B. He displayed vigorously while trotting forward impetuously to welcome them. At this, they flew up into the trees and settled there, not returning to the ground that morning. C, however, was a little more successful. On two occasions, he approached the group of hens while A and B were fighting violently. On the first occasion (on 24th), the fight lasted six minutes: A and B rolled together 20m down the steep hill, away from the hens and into ground previously occupied by B. When A returned, he found C displaying to the hens, chased him off after a fight lasting three minutes, and then mated with two of the hens. On 26th April, C tried the same ploy with more success. B had approached to within 5m of A, who left his harem to deal with the intruder. Meanwhile, C approached the 12 hens and, although nine of them flew off into the trees, two did mate with him in the ten minutes that A was fighting B.

These fights were serious matters. Two fighting cocks pecked vigorously at each other's heads and buffeted one another with their wings, sometimes rolling head over heels downhill while locked in combat. B was bleeding from the head after the fight on 26th, and even A was somewhat battered (plate 226). It is by no means unusual to see such battle marks on cocks in the spring, and there have been several reports of cocks being killed in fights (e.g. Hjorth 1979). We saw A beat B in four fights; A beat C in one fight and chased him away from the hens on another occasion. The hens, it seems, preferred the best fighter: A.



226. Capercaillie *Tetrao urogallus*, cock A, note feathers missing from head following fights, Grampian, May 1977 (C. R. Knights & T. Andrewartha)

Here we have a possible resolution of our paradox. If hens prefer the best fighters, and if, in the past, big size has conferred an advantage in fighting, then natural selection—sexual selection—is likely to have favoured big cocks. This can, however, be only part of the story: although the sexes are dimorphic in other polygamous species of grouse, none of them shows such a big difference in body size as do Capercaillie cocks and hens.

Acknowledgments

J. Oswald showed us the display ground; I. B. Trenholm drew the figures; and Dr A. Watson and Dr D. Jenkins criticised the manuscript.

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Predictions of future Nearctic landbird vagrants to Europe

Chandler S. Robbins



Rarities generate more than their share of interest among the birdwatching public. The avid field observer thrills at breaking an arrival or departure date. The 'twitcher' travels long distances to add rare species to his list. Ringers are attracted to coastal concentration points or offshore islands hoping to handle, photograph and describe some foreign waif that has had the misfortune to be carried thousands of kilometres off its normal migratory course by vagaries of the weather.

An American's interest in the landfall of vagrant Nearctic landbirds in Europe is understandably different from that of you who are on the receiving end. Our first questions are: (1) are the small numbers of American vagrants that reach European shores indicative of tremendous losses at sea of other individuals of the same species, and (2) do these losses involve such a large proportion of the population of some species that the loss could be detected by the North American Breeding Bird Survey in the following summer?

Along the western shore of the North Atlantic, one of the chief sources of vagrant birds is the occasional passage of a tropical hurricane north-eastward along or parallel to the coast. Depending to some degree on the date that a hurricane affects the east coast of the United States or Canada, one may predict some of the species that will be deposited along its course. The primary concern of ornithologists who have reported on the effects of such storms, however, has been the recurrence of species such as White-tailed Tropicbirds *Phaethon lepturus*, Sooty Terns *Sterna fuscata*, Black Skimmers *Rynchops nigra*, or Yellow-billed Cuckoos* far outside their normal ranges. The more difficult-to-assess storm-related mortality of other species has received less attention.

Ringers along the Atlantic coast of the United States and Canada know that stiff westerly winds frequently cause a great accumulation of grounded migrants along the coast. On certain days, a large proportion of these birds arrives in emaciated condition, having been blown far offshore and then having struggled back, flying into the wind. The terrestrial birds that make a successful landfall, and become European vagrants, must often be only a tiny fraction of those that are lost at sea. Thus, my primary interest in North American vagrants in Europe is not so much to learn or to predict which species have successfully made the passage, but to use this information to gain a better understanding of the potential impact on Nearctic bird populations of the tremendous losses that may take place at sea.

*See tables 1 and 2 for scientific names.

Meteorological context

Paramount to any understanding of storm-blown migrants is basic information on both normal and abnormal atmospheric circulation across the North Atlantic. Norman Elkins (1979) has done a masterful job of addressing this subject. Before seeing his paper, I had laboured in vain trying to relate some of the British landfalls to passage of American hurricanes. As Mr Elkins has convincingly shown, however, fast eastward-moving waves associated with certain strong warm sectors provide not only a more logical explanation than that offered by western Atlantic hurricanes, but are supported by the arrival dates of 75% of the vagrants.

Methods

Accepted records, 1947-76

I have based this study on accepted records of North American passerines and near-passerines (cuckoos, nightjars, and woodpeckers) recorded in Britain and Ireland during the same 30-year period (1947-76) summarised in Elkins's table 1. Older records, dating from before the large network of well-manned coastal and island bird observatories, may be biased by disproportionately large numbers of the bigger and more conspicuous species (eg Yellow-billed Cuckoo); the records for 1977 and 1978 were not complete and were still under consideration by the Rarities Committee when this study was undertaken.

Candidate species

If one were subjectively to compile a list of candidate species composed of those most likely to make a successful transatlantic crossing, it would reasonably be based on those species already proved successful. If we seek greater objectivity, however, we can employ modern statistical techniques and computer technology to examine a large array of data and make logical predictions based on information provided to this end. It will be necessary to define the 'universe' of species from which the best candidates will be selected.

Many North American species have some chance of appearing in the British Isles one or more times during the next few centuries. Long-distance migrants that travel along the east coast of Canada and the United States are more likely to make transatlantic migrations than are rare, western, or non-migratory species. Thus, a logical starting point is to define the universe of interest in terms of numerical abundance along the North American east coast in autumn. The best data sources for this purpose are banding (ringing) records from coastal stations at Manomet Bird Observatory in Massachusetts, Island Beach State Park in New Jersey, and Kiptopeke Beach in Virginia. These three stations are about evenly spaced from Cape Cod Bay to the mouth of Chesapeake Bay and each has a large sample of recent banding records. The years selected for this study varied among stations, depending on consistency of coverage and availability of summarised data. The Manomet figures were from 52,081 birds banded during August to November 1969-76; the Island Beach data were from 207,253 birds banded in autumn 1956-68; the Kiptopeke data were from

94,865 birds banded during late August to late October 1967-75. Each passerine and near-passerine species that averaged two or more captures per year at one or more of the three stations was included in the analysis. Excluded, however, were those species that breed on both sides of the Atlantic: Sand Martin (Bank Swallow) *Riparia riparia*, Swallow (Barn Swallow) *Hirundo rustica*, Wren (Winter Wren) *Troglodytes troglodytes*, Treecreeper (Brown Creeper) *Certhia familiaris*, Starling (European Starling) *Sturnus vulgaris* and House Sparrow *Passer domesticus*.

Unfortunately, two vagrants already on the British and Irish list did not qualify for inclusion in this study. These were the Common Nighthawk, an aerial feeder that is rarely captured at the coastal banding stations, and the Summer Tanager, which nests primarily southwest of the banding stations and was too infrequently caught to qualify for inclusion. These two species were omitted from the analysis to be consistent. The analysis, therefore, is based on 31 species that occurred in Britain and Ireland during the period 1947-76, and 73 candidate species for which there were no accepted records up to and including 1976.

Definition of migration characteristics

To be a likely candidate for transatlantic migration, a passerine species must be present in good numbers at the right place at the right time, and must be physically capable of surviving an extended trip with little or no food intake along the way. Thus, an index of these characteristics, or of associated factors, should be correlated with the probability (success or failure) of the species crossing to Europe. If numerical values are assigned to various migration characteristics, a computer algorithm (calculation in a number of steps) could select those variables that are most closely correlated with successful crossings and derive a formula from which candidate species could be ranked according to their likelihood of completing the trip. The success of the exercise depends largely on the ability of the investigator to select a powerful battery of predictor variables for the computer to select from, and to assign the most appropriate numerical data to each variable. I will specify in detail the data I used so that future researchers can profit from my inadequacies and generate better predictions.

ABUNDANCE ON EAST COAST OF NORTH AMERICA A glance at the list of North American vagrants that have been recorded in Britain and Ireland supports the hypothesis that abundance during autumnal migration on the western shore of the North Atlantic is a prime factor for inclusion. For each of the three banding stations, the total number of new banded birds of each species within a sampling period was divided by the total bandings during the same period to obtain the relative percentage of each species. Percentages were individually summed across the three stations to obtain a pooled index of abundance for each of the 104 species.

BODY WEIGHT The North American passerines and near-passerines recorded most frequently in the British Isles tend to be medium to large birds. Even among the wood-warblers, the large species are primarily the ones with the most records. For this reason, body weight was selected as one of the input characteristics. The variable was defined as mean autumn weight of primarily east coast birds from the Operation Recovery banding program for the years 1966-68.

STANDARD DEVIATION OF BODY WEIGHT This statistic, which measures variability within a sample, is high for species whose individuals differ extensively in amount of body fat, and is low for species in which all individuals weigh about the same. It is one way, therefore, of detecting

species in which some individuals are prepared for long nonstop flights. The Blackpoll Warbler, for example, stores much fat for use during migration ($SD=3.63$, $n=1,635$), whereas the Eastern Pewee does not ($SD=1.45$, $n=229$); both species have a mean weight of 14g. The standard deviations were taken from the same source as the body weights and are based on samples of at least several hundred individuals for most species. For species such as the Common Grackle, in which males are much heavier than females, only male weights were used, to avoid a high standard deviation caused by sexual dimorphism rather than by amount of body fat.

MIGRATORY DISTANCE All North American vagrants in Europe are migratory species, with long-distance migrants far outnumbering short-distance migrants. Only crude estimates of the usual migration distances of each species can be made until several banded North American passerine vagrants are encountered in Europe, and more is known about the relation between their normal breeding and wintering areas in the New World. Several candidate species may have a leap-frog pattern of migration, with those from the northern extremity migrating to the southern portion of the winter range. Lacking detailed information of this kind, the migratory distance was arbitrarily taken as the straight line distance in miles from the centre of the breeding range of the eastern population to the approximate centre of the winter range.

WEST-TO-EAST COMPONENT OF THE AUTUMNAL MIGRATION This variable is difficult to quantify, but the concept of a long-distance migrant from the interior overshooting the coast and heading over the Atlantic is too important to ignore (Russell 1978). Consequently, I used a simple code of 0, 1 or 2 as an estimate of the west-to-east component of autumnal migration of each species. These estimates were based on: (a) the relation between breeding and wintering areas; (b) knowledge of migratory routes; (c) the abundance of transients at coastal versus inland locations; and (d) tendency for northeastward (reverse) migration in autumn.

DATES OF MIGRATION Sharrock & Sharrock (1976) showed that North American vagrants are strongly clustered in the first three weeks of October, with only one or two records for the entire month of August and the first half of September. This observation does not correspond with the peak of migration within the normal range of these birds, so it appears likely that the weather patterns essential to a swift ocean crossing rarely occur before late September. Consequently, the likelihood of early migrants reaching Europe is greatly reduced. I coded migration dates on a scale of 1 to 15, using dates encompassing 90% passage at the Ocean City Operation Recovery station on the coast of Maryland (1964-68) and comparing these dates with the Sharrocks' histogram.

NOCTURNAL VERSUS DIURNAL MIGRATION During marginal or poor weather conditions, one would expect nocturnal migrants to become disoriented more frequently than diurnal migrants. In an effort to determine whether this contributes to the arrival of North American vagrants in Europe, I coded each species on a scale of 1 to 4. Species I have never observed on migration during daylight were coded 4 and those for which I have no evidence of nocturnal migration were coded 1. Species known to migrate both by night and by day were coded 2 or 3.

Statistical analysis

A stepwise regression program (Barr *et al.* 1976) was used to examine the relationship between the number of records in Britain and Ireland (dependent variable) of each of the 104 species with relation to the following eight (independent) variables: (a) abundance at Manomet, (b) abundance at the three coastal stations combined, (c) body weight, (d) standard deviation of body weight, (e) migratory distance, (f) west-to-east component of migration, (g) dates of migration, and (h) nocturnal versus diurnal migration. The variable most closely correlated with the number of records in the British Isles was selected first; each of the other variables was then examined in connection with the first, and the one that improved the correlation the most was selected. This process continued until none of the remaining variables significantly improved the correlation between independent and dependent variables. The selected variables were then used to calculate predicted values for each species.

Results

The stepwise regression program sequentially selected the following four variables:

- 1. (f) West-to-east component ($F=3.35$, probability of greater $F=0.0701$)
- 2. (d) Standard deviation of body weight (14.10, 0.0003)
- 3. (e) Migratory distance (!1.45, 0.0010)
- 4. (b) Abundance, three stations combined (9.61, 0.0025)

The amount of variance in the number of records explained by the regression model (R^2) is not of direct interest because it is strongly affected by the number of species included in the model. Likewise, the predicted

Table 1. Predicted relative likelihood of autumn transatlantic vagrancy (see text) and actual numbers of Nearctic passerines and near-passerines observed in Britain and Ireland in spring and in autumn/winter during 1947-76

The predicted values (P) in tables 1 and 2 were calculated with the following formula:
 $P = -2.169 + 0.412 (SD) + 0.164 (ABUND) + 0.0823 (DIST) + 0.795 (W-E)$
where SD is the standard deviation of body weight in grams; ABUND is the sum of the percentage abundances at Manomet, Island Beach and Kiptopeke; DIST is the distance in hundreds of miles between centres of breeding and winter ranges; and W-E is the coded estimate of west-to-east component of autumn migration

Species	SPRING	AUTUMN AND WINTER	
	Observed	Observed	Predicted
Yellow-rumped Warbler <i>Dendroica coronata</i>	0	7	8.18
Yellow-billed Cuckoo <i>Coccyzus americanus</i>	0	18	6.26
Bobolink <i>Dolichonyx oryzivorus</i>	0	6	6.11
Blackpoll Warbler <i>Dendroica striata</i>	0	14	6.02
American Redstart <i>Setophaga ruticilla</i>	0	2	5.77
Grey-checked Thrush <i>Catharus minimus</i>	0	13	5.27
Black-billed Cuckoo <i>Coccyzus erythrophthalmus</i>	0	5	5.21
Rose-breasted Grosbeak <i>Pheucticus ludovicianus</i>	0	7	4.33
Red-eyed Vireo <i>Vireo olivaceus</i>	0	8	4.32
Swainson's Thrush <i>Catharus ustulatus</i>	1	3	3.96
Veery <i>Catharus fuscescens</i>	0	1	3.95
White-throated Sparrow <i>Zonotrichia albicollis</i>	6	4	3.56
Slate-coloured Junco <i>Junco hyemalis</i>	6	0	3.36
Northern Waterthrush <i>Seiurus noveboracensis</i>	0	2	3.22
Tennessee Warbler <i>Vermivora peregrina</i>	0	2	3.04
Yellowthroat <i>Geothlypis trichas</i>	0	1	3.04
American Robin <i>Turdus migratorius</i>	2	13	2.85
Northern Oriole <i>Icterus galbula</i>	2	10	2.77
Yellow Warbler <i>Dendroica petechia</i>	0	1	2.43
Scarlet Tanager <i>Piranga olivacea</i>	0	2	2.24
Ovenbird <i>Seiurus aurocapillus</i>	0	1	2.02
Black-and-white Warbler <i>Mniotilta varia</i>	0	1	1.96
Parula Warbler <i>Parula americana</i>	0	3	1.33
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker <i>Sphyrapicus varius</i>	0	1	1.25
Hermit Thrush <i>Catharus guttatus</i>	1	0	1.06
Fox Sparrow <i>Zonotrichia iliaca</i>	1	0	1.04
Evening Grosbeak <i>Hesperiphona vespertina</i>	1	0	0.95
Song Sparrow <i>Zonotrichia melodia</i>	4	0	0.83
Brown Thrasher <i>Toxostoma rufum</i>	0	1	0.50
Rufous-sided Towhee <i>Pipilo erythrophthalmus</i>	1	0	0.24
Hooded Warbler <i>Wilsonia citrina</i>	0	1	0.15
Common Nighthawk <i>Chordeiles minor</i>	0	6	—
Summer Tanager <i>Piranga rubra</i>	0	1	—

number of records for each species varies inversely with the number of candidate species in the list; thus, the results cannot be used to predict probability of occurrence, but only to indicate relative position in the list of candidates.

In table 1, for example, the predicted values for five of the top ten species are considerably below the observed number of British and Irish records. If only the 31 species with accepted records had been included in the analysis, the predicted values would have been much closer to the observed values; with the addition of 73 unrecorded species to the model, however, the slope

Table 2. Most likely candidates for autumn transatlantic flight: predicted relative likelihood of autumn vagrancy (see text) of Nearctic passerines and near-passerines not observed in Britain or Ireland during 1947-76

Species	Predicted number
GROUP 1	
Catbird <i>Dumetella carolinensis</i>	4.86
Connecticut Warbler <i>Oporornis agilis</i>	4.73
Belted Kingfisher <i>Ceryle alcyon</i>	4.45
Eastern Kingbird <i>Tyrannus tyrannus</i>	4.36
Yellow-shafted Flicker <i>Colaptes auratus</i>	4.29
Common Grackle <i>Quiscalus quiscula</i>	4.22
GROUP 2	
Dickcissel <i>Spiza americana</i>	2.86
Alder Flycatcher <i>Empidonax alnorum</i>	2.86
Blue Jay <i>Cyanocitta cristata</i>	2.45
Wood Thrush <i>Hylocichla mustelina</i>	2.42
Black-throated Blue Warbler <i>Dendroica caerulescens</i>	2.29
Red-winged Blackbird <i>Agelaius phoeniceus</i>	2.15
Canada Warbler <i>Wilsonia canadensis</i>	2.06
Orange-crowned Warbler <i>Vermivora celata</i>	1.93
Black-capped Chickadee <i>Parus atricapillus</i>	1.83
Palm Warbler <i>Dendroica palmarum</i>	1.75
GROUP 3	
Yellow-bellied Flycatcher <i>Empidonax flaviventris</i>	1.55
Whip-poor-will <i>Caprimulgus vociferus</i>	1.41
Mourning Warbler <i>Oporornis philadelphia</i>	1.36
Magnolia Warbler <i>Dendroica magnolia</i>	1.33
Cape May Warbler <i>Dendroica tigrina</i>	1.33
Cedar Waxwing <i>Bombycilla cedrorum</i>	1.20
Yellow-breasted Chat <i>Icteria virens</i>	1.18
Great Crested Flycatcher <i>Myiarchus crinitus</i>	1.17
Savannah Sparrow <i>Ammodramus sandwichensis</i>	1.13
Ruby-crowned Kinglet <i>Regulus calendula</i>	1.09
Golden-crowned Kinglet <i>Regulus satrapa</i>	1.06
Eastern Pewee <i>Contopus virens</i>	1.03
Black-throated Green Warbler <i>Dendroica virens</i>	0.98
Least Flycatcher <i>Empidonax minimus</i>	0.96
Blue-winged Warbler <i>Vermivora pinus</i>	0.91
Philadelphia Vireo <i>Vireo philadelphicus</i>	0.91
Prairie Warbler <i>Dendroica discolor</i>	0.90
GROUP 4	
Wilson's Warbler <i>Wilsonia pusilla</i>	0.83
Bay-breasted Warbler <i>Dendroica castanea</i>	0.79
Swamp Sparrow <i>Zonotrichia georgiana</i>	0.65
Northern Mockingbird <i>Mimus polyglottos</i>	0.63
White-crowned Sparrow <i>Zonotrichia leucophrys</i>	0.52

of the regression line was decreased, resulting in a poorer fit for those species with multiple occurrences.

The 38 most likely candidates for successful transatlantic crossing, based on the four variables selected by the stepwise procedure, are shown in table 2, arranged in decreasing order of likelihood. These species are divided into four groups for discussion purposes. The breaking point for inclusion in table 2 is arbitrary and does not correspond to any particular probability of occurrence, but is a point at which the predicted values in table 1 fall off sharply. Of the species that have occurred in Britain, only Rufous-sided Towhee and Hooded Warbler had lower predicted values.

The remaining 35 candidate species are listed in taxonomic sequence (Voous 1973, 1977) rather than by predicted values (probabilities are given only for those species on *The 'British Birds' List of Birds of the Western Palearctic*, 1978):

Mourning Dove *Zenaidura macroura*, Downy Woodpecker *Dendrocopos pubescens*, Hairy Woodpecker *D. villosus*, Eastern Phoebe *Sayornis phoebe*, Acadian Flycatcher *Empidonax virens* (0.04), Tree Swallow *Tachycineta bicolor*, Long-billed Marsh Wren *Cistothorus palustris*, Carolina Wren *Thryothorus ludovicianus*, House Wren *Troglodytes aedon*, Blue-grey Gnatcatcher *Polioptila caerulea*, Carolina Chickadee *Parus carolinensis*, Boreal Chickadee *P. hudsonicus*, Tufted Titmouse *P. bicolor*, Red-breasted Nuthatch *Sitta canadensis* (-0.14), White-breasted Nuthatch *S. carolinensis*, White-eyed Vireo *Vireo griseus*, Solitary Vireo *V. solitarius*, Warbling Vireo *V. gilvus*, American Goldfinch *Carduelis tristis*, Purple Finch *Carpodacus purpureus*, House Finch *C. mexicanus*, Nashville Warbler *Vermivora ruficapilla*, Chestnut-sided Warbler *Dendroica pensylvanica*, Pine Warbler *D. pinus*, Blackburnian Warbler *D. fusca*, Worm-eating Warbler *Helminthophila vermivorus*, American Tree Sparrow *Spizella arborea*, Chipping Sparrow *S. passerina*, Field Sparrow *S. pusilla*, Grasshopper Sparrow *Ammodramus saviarum*, Seaside Sparrow *A. maritimus*, Lincoln's Sparrow *Zonotrichia lincolni*, Northern Cardinal *Cardinalis cardinalis*, Blue Grosbeak *Guiraca caerulea* (0.19), and Indigo Bunting *Passerina cyanea* (0.12).

The Acadian Flycatcher and Red-breasted Nuthatch are on the Western Palearctic list, but have not yet been recorded in the British Isles; the Blue Grosbeak and Indigo Bunting are Category D species not yet admitted to the British and Irish list since occurrences seem more likely to have been the result of escapes from captivity than due to transatlantic vagrancy.

Discussion

The six Group 1 birds in table 2 are relatively large species compared with others in the table. The smallest species in this group, the Connecticut Warbler, tends to become excessively fat in autumn and would seem to be a prime candidate for transatlantic passage. It is extremely secretive, however, and is much more apt to be trapped or netted rather than sighted. The other five species are conspicuous and easily identified. Three of the six species appear on the Western Palearctic list. The Belted Kingfisher is an accepted Category A bird on the British and Irish list, with occurrences in 1908, 1978/79 and 1979/80; the Yellow-shafted Flicker is a Category D species known only from ship-assisted passage; and the Catbird is accepted for the Western Palearctic but not for Britain and Ireland. Neither the predictions nor the species sequence given in table 1 carry the reported degree of accuracy. Populations are constantly changing, as demonstrated by the North American Breeding Bird Survey (Bystrak & Robbins 1977; unpublished data); for example, the Eastern Kingbird is currently

decreasing while the Common Grackle is increasing, and these changes in population status will affect their relative positions in Group 1.

The ten Group 2 birds include several which present identification problems. Even experienced North American banders are unable to distinguish Willow *Empidonax traillii* from Alder Flycatchers in the hand. Most banded individuals are still reported under the former combined name of 'Traill's Flycatcher', and some are identified only to genus because of problems in separating them from Least, Acadian or Yellow-bellied Flycatchers. The female Dickcissel resembles a female House Sparrow. While adult male and immature male Black-throated Blue Warblers are distinctive, females could easily be overlooked. The Orange-crowned Warbler is rather nondescript and, in a brief view, could be mistaken for a *Phylloscopus* warbler; similarly, the identification of a Palm Warbler could prove problematic, especially in the hand, where its distinctive tail-wagging habit is not observed. A Black-capped Chickadee, however, should be easily distinguished from a Willow *Parus montanus* or a Marsh Tit *P. palustris* by plumage and voice. Two of the ten species in Group 2 are on the Western Palearctic list: the Wood Thrush has not been accepted for the British and Irish list; the Palm Warbler is in Category D, on the basis of a tide-line corpse.

Group 3, which contains 17 species, is not clearly separable from either Group 2 or Group 4 and perhaps should have been combined with them. Group 3 contains the Whip-poor-will, Great Crested Flycatcher, Cedar Waxwing, Yellow-breasted Chat, and 13 small to very small passerines. Had there not been British records of Parula and Tennessee Warblers, I should have questioned whether birds with a normal body weight of 10g or less were capable of a transatlantic flight. Among Group 3 species, a silent, autumn Whip-poor-will might prove difficult to detect. Cedar Waxwings normally travel in flocks, but a lone transatlantic survivor might be overlooked as a drab Waxwing *Bombycilla garrulus*. As with Group 2, there are several major problems of identification. An immature or female Mourning Warbler would require careful observation to separate it from a Connecticut Warbler, a process unlikely to be helped by its typically skulking behaviour; it might also even be confused with a Yellowthroat. Field separation of Eastern and Western Pewees *Contopus sordidulus* is almost impossible. An out-of-range *Myiarchus* flycatcher could not safely be assumed to be a Great Crested. A Golden-crowned Kinglet could easily be passed over as a Firecrest *Regulus ignicapillus*, although it lacks the latter's rather bright green upperparts and bronzed breast-sides. The only Group 3 species on the British and Irish list is the Cape May Warbler, recorded in spring 1977 (*Brit. Birds* 73: 2-5).

Among the Group 4 species, an immature Bay-breasted Warbler would require careful study to separate it from an immature Blackpoll Warbler, since both plumage and call-notes are similar: no North American field guide depicts them adequately. Swamp and Lincoln's Sparrows can be confused.

Discussion so far has been limited to the results of the statistical analysis summarised in tables 1 and 2. A few comments are in order relative to the

effects of other independent variables, and to species that, because of habits or habitat requirements, are captured in very small numbers at coastal banding stations.

Carrying the stepwise regression one step farther resulted in the selection of migration date as the fifth variable ($F=2.10$, probability of greater $F=0.15$, $R^2=0.35$, other F values and probabilities not changed appreciably). Forcing the nocturnal versus diurnal migration variable into the analysis at the sixth step ($F=0.48$, probability of greater $F=0.49$, $R^2=0.36$) also had little effect on the other variables. There is no statistical justification for including these two additional variables, though biologically either or both could have an important influence on transatlantic vagrants. This part of the analysis, therefore, explored the effects that these additional variables would have on the predictions. Except for minor changes in sequence, there was no change in Group 1. Inclusion of date raised Whip-poor-will, Savannah Sparrow and Ruby-crowned Kinglet from Group 3 to Group 2, and elevated Swamp Sparrow from Group 4 to Group 3. Addition of nocturnal versus diurnal migration caused no further change in the placement of these species. Inclusion of date dropped Great Crested Flycatcher from Group 3 to 4, and dropped Least Flycatcher, Blue-winged Warbler and Wilson's Warbler from consideration. Inclusion of nocturnal versus diurnal migration reinstated Least Flycatcher, but only in Group 4.

Inclusion of migration date also brought into consideration five species that had been excluded from table 2 because of the low predicted number: Eastern Phoebe, Lincoln's Sparrow and Nashville Warbler were assigned to Group 3, and Indigo Bunting and Solitary Vireo to Group 4. The only additional effect of including nocturnal versus diurnal migration was to raise Blue Grosbeak to Group 4. It is hoped that time and further research will cast some light on the importance of these last two variables.

Species present but undersampled at banding stations were not analysed, but some of the more common ones should be mentioned. Common Nighthawk is already represented by seven British records up to 1976 (six during 1947-76). Another common aerial feeder, the Chimney Swift *Chaetura pelagica*, is a long-distance migrant and should be considered. Unexpectedly, the Brown-headed Cowbird *Molothrus ater*, Rusty Blackbird *Euphagus carolinensis* and Eastern Meadowlark *Sturnella magna* were captured so infrequently at all stations during the autumn that they were excluded from the analysis. All are short-distance diurnal migrants and probably not prime candidates for transatlantic passage. Only two of the more highly migratory members of this family, the Bobolink and the Northern Oriole, have reached Britain so far. Note, however, that Larkin *et al.* (1979) found two species of icterids, the Brown-headed Cowbird and the Red-winged Blackbird *Agelaius phoeniceus*, more than 110 km offshore from New England in mid October 1971, and Durand (1963) recorded a Rusty Blackbird aboard RMS *Mauretania* one day out from New York City.

I hoped to find correlations between occurrence of American vagrants in Europe and populations of these same species in America. Breeding Bird Survey data were examined for those species with multiple occurrences in

Britain in a single year to see if their transatlantic crossings were associated with an especially high breeding population in the year of occurrence or a decrease the following year. No consistent correlation was found with the Breeding Bird Survey data for the region east of the Mississippi River. If future meteorological analyses can define the probable area of origin of a large-scale incident of American vagrants in Europe, it may be informative to examine Breeding Bird Survey data in greater detail for those particular species.

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Summary

Migratory habits of 31 species of vagrants from North America and 73 candidate species not recorded in either Britain or Ireland during the 30 years 1947-76 were analysed by multiple regression. There was a significant correlation between the number of British and Irish records and the west-to-east component of normal migration, standard deviation of body weight, migratory distance, and abundance on the west coast of the North Atlantic. The candidate species were ranked in order of likelihood of successful transatlantic flight based on the four input variables (table 2).

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Semipalmated Plover: new to Britain and Ireland

Paul A. Dukes



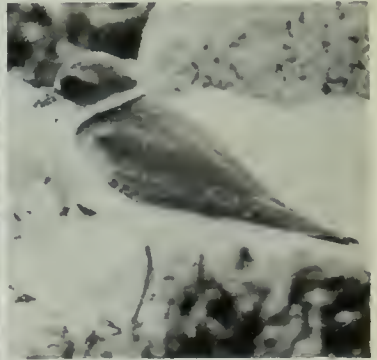
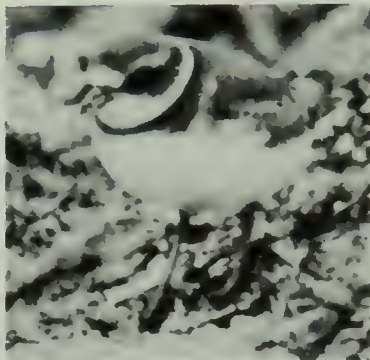
At about midday on 9th October 1978, near Porth Killier, St Agnes, Isles of Scilly, F. H. D. Hicks and I heard an unfamiliar wader call: a plaintive, disyllabic 'che-wee', not unlike the 'chewit' note of the Spotted Redshank *Tringa erythropus*, but softer and without a sharp upward inflection on the second syllable. We were unable to see the bird responsible, and, as the sound of further calls receded into the distance, we could only speculate as to its identity. Ten minutes later, I heard the calls again, this time much closer and apparently originating from a small wader which flew rapidly across Porth Killier towards the west of the island. These brief views increased my confusion for, while the bird looked like an immature Ringed Plover *Charadrius hiaticula*, the calls were clearly not typical of that species.

Despite an extensive search, the odd plover was not relocated on 9th, but, on the following day, several other observers saw and heard the bird as it flew over and were similarly perplexed by its combination of strange call and familiar plumage. It seemed unlikely that a Ringed Plover could have such a distinctive aberration of voice, and we began to consider the possibility that it might be the closely related Nearctic Semipalmated Plover *C. semipalmatus*, which we knew to be very similar to the Ringed Plover. Reference was made to Peterson (1947) and Robbins *et al.* (1966); the call of the Semipalmated Plover was described in the former as a plaintive 'chi-we' or 'tooi', second note higher, and in the latter as 'chur-wee', thus conforming to our description of the call of the St Agnes bird. The literature, however, did not promote optimism at confirming the identification, as it implied that the two plovers were indistinguishable in the field unless the partial toe-webbing (from which the Semipalmated Plover derives its scientific and vernacular names) could be discerned.

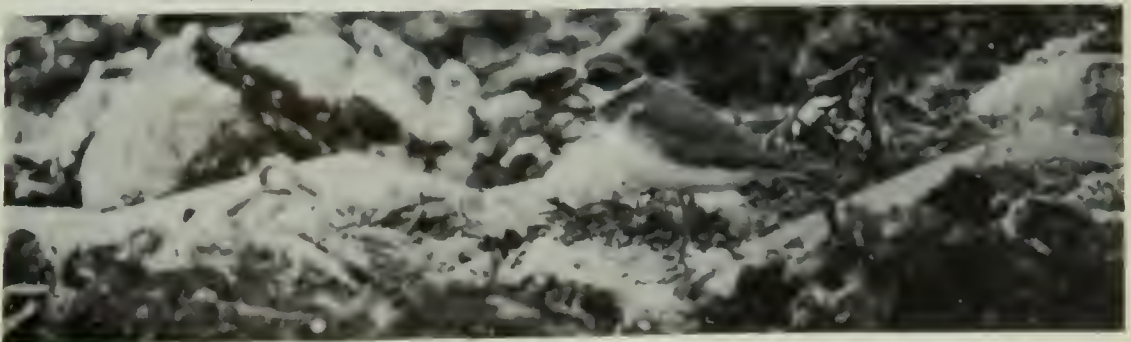
During 11th October, the bird was heard and seen several times among about 70 Ringed Plovers on Periglis Beach, but it could not be isolated from the flock and the views were again frustratingly brief. The problems we had experienced with this puzzling wader had been communicated to the many birdwatchers staying on the nearby island of St Mary's, and, during the day, over 50 observers managed to see the plover, albeit distantly or in

flight. After eluding critical examination in this manner, the bird finally moved away from the Ringed Plover flock in the late afternoon and began to feed near seaweed deposits in a small cove below St Agnes Church. A. Dean, PAD, J. Gregory, M. Parker, J. Ridley and D. & J. Sykes watched it until dusk, at ranges down to a few metres, and noted a number of differences from nearby juvenile Ringed Plovers, which are discussed in detail later. The plover eventually flew to an area of rocks adjacent to the beach, where the diagnostic palmations between the toes were clearly visible as the bird stood with its toes spread on a rock. With good timing, FHDH and W. Spencer arrived at this moment and were able to see this detail which confirmed our earlier suspicions. Thereafter, the Semipalmated Plover was invariably to be found on Periglis Beach whenever tidal conditions permitted, and remained in this area until at least 9th November, entertaining hundreds of birdwatchers during this period.

Initially, the American wader was subjected to constant harassment from the local Ringed Plovers. Possibly as a result of these frequent attacks, it began to inhabit an area near the top of the beach, feeding on and around mounds of decomposing seaweed. The Semipalmated Plover would assume a crouching posture when approached by a Ringed Plover, and utter a piping 'chip chip' call, quite different from the usual flight call, but equally distinctive. An attack by a Ringed Plover usually resulted in the Semipalmated flying to another part of the beach, but, on at least one occasion, a brief fight ensued, with the combatants rolling over the sand. Later in October, the Semipalmated seemed to have established a small feeding territory in the western corner of Periglis Beach, and had become noticeably pugnacious in defending this area, driving off all intruders, including Ringed Plovers. The approach of a Ringed Plover into its territory evinced the same vocal response, but, instead of adopting a submissive posture, the Semipalmated would rush at the intruder in a very



227-230. Immature Semipalmated Plover *Charadrius semipalmatus*, Isles of Scilly, October 1978
(P. D. Goriup; Steve Welch; K. C. Osborne; S. A. Robinson)



aggressive manner, with tail fanned and inclined to one side. Like all waders on Periglis Beach, its feeding pattern was regulated by tidal movements; at high tide, it associated with Ringed Plovers at a communal roost above the high water level. The Semipalmated Plover appeared to have identical feeding behaviour to the Ringed Plovers. It was an extremely confiding bird and could be approached to within a few metres, preferring to run away rather than fly. The following details were noted:

PLUMAGE Crown greyish-brown, with profuse, silvery-white feather fringes visible at very close range. Lores dark brown, meeting in narrow line above bill, broadening to form patch around and below eye, this narrowing to extend as thin collar contrasting with paler crown. Small creamy-white patch on forehead, merging into narrow supercilium which broadened slightly to end as buffy smudge just behind eye. Throat and lower cheeks white, narrowing into thin band around nape, dividing crown from mantle. Below this white collar, thin dark brown line widened at sides of breast, then reduced to just meet in centre of breast. A few silvery-white feather tips visible on breast band. Remainder of underparts white. Mantle greyish-brown, slightly darker than on nominate Ringed Plover *C. h. hiaticula*; close

examination revealed scattering of feathers with silvery fringes and thin blackish sub-terminal crescents. Coverts brown centred, each fringed silvery-white, creating effect of paler panel contrasting with brown mantle, making latter appear as darker saddle. Primaries blackish. Wing tips projected a few millimetres beyond tail tip. I was unable to distinguish any striking difference in flight pattern from Ringed Plover, but some observers noted generally darker appearance, with thinner, neater wing-bar, which contrasted more with darker primaries and secondaries. **BARE PARTS** Bill black, with very small area of dull pink at base of lower mandible. Legs dull greenish-brown at front, orange-yellow at rear. Narrow, dull yellow orbital ring visible at close range.

Field characters

The long stay of the Semipalmated Plover and close proximity of many juvenile, first-winter and adult Ringed Plovers provided excellent opportunities for comparison. It is evident that a number of characters displayed by the St Agnes individual will be of value in providing criteria for the identification of Semipalmated Plover, but it would be premature without further research to suggest that all the differences set out below are completely reliable and applicable to every individual.

Call

The distinctive 'che-wee' call of the Semipalmated Plover on St Agnes was an infallible means of locating the bird; indeed it is unlikely that it would have been discovered among the numerous Ringed Plovers if it had not been so vocal.

Observers with experience of Semipalmated Plovers in the USA confirmed that the calls were typical, and it is clear that the difference in voice is one of the best means of distinguishing Semipalmated from Ringed Plover. The usual call of Lesser Golden Plover *Pluvialis dominica* could be confused with the Semipalmated Plover's 'che-wee', but it is generally louder and fuller in tone, reflecting the larger size of the bird.

The piping 'chip chip' anxiety call often drew attention to the Semipalmated when it was involved in a confrontation on Periglis Beach, and was unlike any call in the vocabulary of Ringed Plover, although not dissimilar to the alarm note of Little Ringed Plover *C. dubius*.

Size

The St Agnes Semipalmated Plover was noticeably smaller than Ringed Plovers, its neat proportions and less robust build leading to comparison with Little Ringed Plover. Such comparison was further enhanced by the American bird's rather rounded crown-shape. Wing-lengths listed by Prater *et al.* (1977) indicate that juvenile Semipalmated Plover is on average 13mm shorter than the nominate race of Ringed Plover, and 6mm shorter than the smaller eastern race, *C. h. tundrae*; wing-length of juvenile Little Ringed Plover is several millimetres shorter than that of Semipalmated Plover. Thus, the American species fits neatly in size between its two European relatives.

Palmations

The partial webbing was more extensive between the middle and the outer toes than between the middle and the inner. Although extending to no more than one-quarter of the length of the toe, the palmations were on occasions surprisingly easy to see in the field, even at ranges of 50m or more. The feature was most noticeable when the toes were spread, for example when the bird stood on a rock or a mound of seaweed. It was often difficult to see the palmations as the plover ran over the sand, and many photographs taken in such situations failed to convey the actual prominence of the webbing. It should be noted that some Ringed Plovers may show vestigial webbing between the middle and the outer toes.

Breast band

It was noticeable that the incomplete dark brown breast-band on the Semipalmated Plover was thinner than those on most juvenile Ringed Plovers, forming a narrow crescent, with no substantial increase in width at

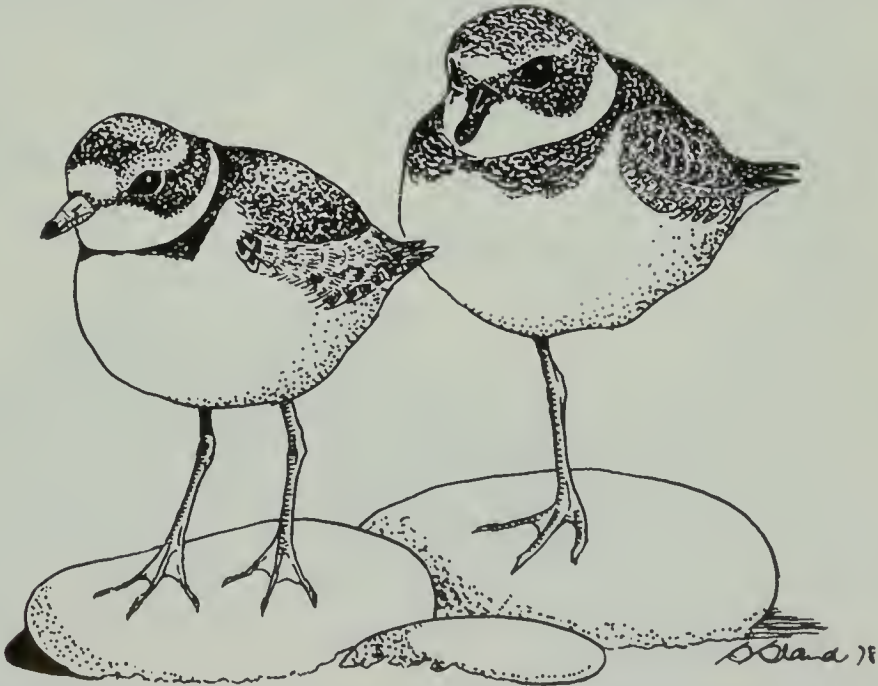


Fig. 1. Immature Semipalmated *Charadrius semipalmatus* (left) and Ringed Plovers *C. hiaticula*, Isles of Scilly, October 1978 (Bryan Bland). Bill of Semipalmated: blackish with small area of dull pink at base of lower mandible, smaller than on Ringed Plover

the sides of the breast. Photographs of adult Semipalmated Plovers on the breeding grounds show that the thinner breast band is also characteristic in adult plumage, and would therefore provide a useful indication of identification in conjunction with the other features described.

Bill

The bill of the Semipalmated Plover was shorter than those of the Ringed Plovers, but about the same depth at the base, giving a stouter general appearance. The bill-length measurements given by Prater *et al.* (1977) show that Semipalmated is on average 1mm shorter than Little Ringed Plover and 2mm shorter than nominate Ringed Plover. The area of dull pink at the base of the lower mandible was smaller than on juvenile Ringed Plovers.

Leg colour

The dull greenish-brown legs with orange-yellow on the rear were duller than those of typical juvenile Ringed Plovers.

Collar

The narrow white collar between the crown and the mantle was thinner than on the juvenile Ringed Plovers, but, on both species, the apparent width of the band can vary with changes in posture. Characteristically, the Semipalmated had a rather hunched posture when standing; in this attitude, the thin collar was a means of picking it out from the Ringed Plovers.

231. Adult Semipalmated Plover *Charadrius semipalmatus*, Canada, July 1976 (*Brian Hawkes*)





232 & 233. Adult Semipalmated Plover *Charadrius semipalmatus*, Peru, August 1979
(Ed Mackrill)

Supercilium

The majority of juvenile Ringed Plovers showed a broader, whiter supercilium extending farther behind the eye than on the Semipalmated. This, however, is a variable character, and a few Ringed plovers had very similar head markings.

Covert-patch

The paler feathering and silvery fringes of the wing-coverts formed a distinct panel which contrasted with the darker mantle. The tone of the latter was darker than on the local Ringed Plovers (apparently *C. h. hiaticula*), although the darker *C. h. tundrae* would perhaps show similar coloration. Examination of many immature Ringed Plovers revealed some with noticeable contrast between coverts and mantle, but on none was the contrast as marked as on the Semipalmated.

Wing-bar

Prater *et al.* (1977) stated that the wing-bar of Semipalmated Plover is slightly shorter and narrower than that of Ringed Plover, with the inner secondaries darker and, usually, the inner webs entirely brown. I was personally unable to discern any difference in the field, but many observers commented that a subtle difference in flight pattern was apparent.

Status

The Semipalmated Plover has a wide Nearctic breeding range, extending from Alaska, across the Yukon and northwest territories of Canada to Quebec, Labrador and Newfoundland. The population winters from southern California, Louisiana and southern Carolina south to southern Argentina and Chile (Godfrey 1966). It is a common passage migrant along the Atlantic seaboard of the United States and has been recorded in Greenland, Siberia and Bermuda. It is perhaps surprising that such an obvious candidate for transatlantic vagrancy has not previously occurred in Britain and Ireland. It is primarily a coastal migrant in the USA, occurring at estuaries and mudflats, where it is one of the most familiar of autumn shorebirds.

Acknowledgments

I am very grateful to P. J. Grant for his helpful comments on the draft of this text.

Summary

An immature Semipalmated Plover *Charadrius semipalmatus* was discovered on St Agnes, Isles of Scilly, on 9th October 1978, remaining until at least 9th November. Differences in voice and appearance between the St Agnes individual and Ringed Plovers *C. hiaticula* are presented as a basis for identification of the species.

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Personalities

24 Paul A. Dukes



234. Paul A. Dukes (Jeff Pick)

Many of Britain's birdwatchers are now highly accomplished and critical field observers. Among the members of this group—critical of themselves as well as of identification criteria—none is more universally respected than Paul Dukes. I had, however, known of Paul only by reputation until I met him on my first visit to Dungeness, in the early 1970s, where many an evening was spent indulging in marathon darts and drinking tournaments. The following mornings, I was frequently astonished to find him returning from a dawn excursion while I was still attempting to climb out of my hangover and sleeping bag. I learned then that this man has great stamina, despite his rather non-athletic appearance.

I discovered subsequently that Paul started birdwatching when a schoolboy in the late 1950s, cycling regularly from his home in Surrey to the Staines area. He became a member of the Junior Bird Recorders' Club, twice winning awards for the high standard of his records: a quality he maintains today. On leaving school, he followed a successful career in the Civil Service in London, in spite of numerous reprimands for encouraging pigeons on his window-ledge, a habit not much appreciated by the occupants of the office below. Already spending most weekends birdwatching all around England and every autumn on the Isles of Scilly, his enthusiasm to spend longer periods farther afield resulted in him abandoning his career in favour of more casual employment. So far, this has enabled him to complete lengthy expeditions to North Africa and the USA and several to India and the Far East. The letters received from him while abroad contain, in the most enviable handwriting, not only details of his ornithological exploits but also elaborate descriptions of his adventures and word-portraits of his gastronomic experiences: Paul is a vivid story-teller. To conserve resources on these trips, his mode of transport is mostly far from luxurious. I do not know whether it was thrift or the heat that caused him to cling to the roof-rack of a rattling bus as it hurtled across 150km of Thailand recently, but, for whatever reason, this feat of endurance was somewhat uncharacteristic of a man who purports to have an overwhelming desire to avoid heroism.

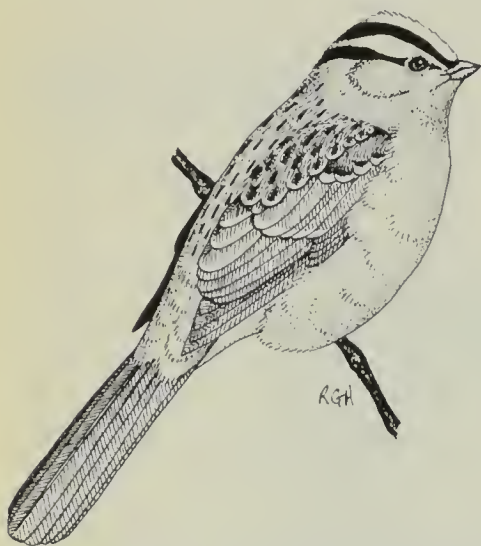
Despite his globe-trotting, he still returns for his annual, or more recently biannual, sojourns in Scilly, where in October he seems as much a part of his favourite island, St Agnes, as is its lighthouse. His thoughtfulness, tact and likeable personality have gained him many friends among the sometimes reticent islanders. In 1978, after irritating his companions with unusually discordant whistling, he tracked down the source of the call he was imitating to Britain's first Semipalmated Plover and isolated it amid a flock of casually indistinguishable fellows: a just reward, and typical of his persistence.

Paul's alertness and powers of observation in the field may, however, desert him when he is in an urban environment. On one occasion, armed with a recently acquired gift-token, he trailed around Boots, filling his basket to the prescribed value, and then presented, to a bemused checkout lady, a Woolworths' voucher. Such confusion applies equally to his choice of clothing: Paul's large frame can often be seen shambling around in a

huge, black, winter overcoat, trousers flapping over flimsy, size-11 plimsolls, a combination displaying the wearer's indifference both to weather conditions and to fashion. Blessed with a boyish sense of humour, his appetite is decidedly manly. Not only does he appear to know the location of almost every café in the south of England, but he can quote from their menus and detail the sizes of the portions, which he categorises as either 'too small' or 'far too small'.

Underneath the appearance of a passive, bumbling type, however, there is a serious and single-minded man, studiously devoted to birdwatching, who organises his life accordingly. In the future, there is little doubt that birdwatching and travel will continue to be the major preoccupations in Paul's life.

MIKE PARKER



White-crowned Sparrows: new to Britain and Ireland

Roger A. Broad and Ray G. Hawley

The White-crowned Sparrow *Zonotrichia leucophrys*, previously unrecorded in Britain and Ireland, occurred twice during May 1977. The first was at Fair Isle, Shetland, and the second, just eight days later, at Hornsea Mere, North Humberside. The two records are complementary; in the first case, trapped within moments of its discovery, the emphasis was placed on the description of the bird in the hand, while the second relied entirely on field observations.

Fair Isle individual

At 10.00 GMT on 15th May 1977, J. Potter came upon a strange, large, bunting-like bird with a prominent black-and-white striped head pattern, at the mouth of the double dyke trap on Fair Isle, Shetland. It was quickly driven into the catching box, which was secured while R. A. Broad and M. A. Peacock were called from the bird observatory nearby. They returned together to collect the bird. A brief glimpse in the catching box confirmed what had been anticipated from JP's description, and the bird was tentatively identified as one of the Nearctic sparrows. It was taken back



235. White-crowned Sparrow *Zonotrichia leucophrys*, Shetland, May 1977 (R. A. Broad)

to the observatory, where it was thoroughly examined and positively identified, with the aid of Godfrey (1966), as a White-crowned Sparrow. It was ringed, measured, photographed and a full description recorded before it was released at Shirva. In the hand, and later, at moderate ranges in the field at Shirva, it was seen by many observers, among whom were RAB, Miss A. D. Cook, MAP, JP, J. Watt and D. Bell, who had also seen the species previously in California and Washington, USA. The bird remained around Shirva for much of the day, feeding in the open on recently cultivated and seeded ground, in the company of several House Sparrows *Passer domesticus*. Side by side, the White-crowned Sparrow was considerably larger and more bulky and had a proportionately longer tail than the House Sparrows. The following day, it was relocated in the same general area, when it was observed for the last time.

The following description was taken in the hand:

UPPERPARTS Strongly contrasted head pattern; bold white central crown stripe from base of bill broadening towards nape where a few silvery grey feathers admixed; wide glossy black lateral crown stripe from nostril to nape; broad white supercilium from just anterior to eye to nape and meeting lateral crown stripe in front of eye; nape mainly warm dove-grey, but a few feathers with brown tips; mantle strongly striated, feathers

with broad mid-tan shaft streak and greyish white fringes; rump uniform olive-brown; uppertail-coverts similar to rump, but longer feathers a little warmer and browner. **TAIL** Central feathers longest, all feathers grey-brown, with warmer light brown fringes, especially on central pair, most narrowly tipped white and outer pair sullied brownish white on outer web and tip of inner web. **WINGS** Primaries and secondaries mid

brown; 3rd, 4th and 5th primaries narrowly edged white on outer web; inner primaries and secondaries narrowly tipped off-white; tertials a little darker than secondaries, with pale chestnut-brown fringes to outer webs and whiter fringe at tip of inner web; primary coverts as primaries; greater coverts a little warmer than secondaries, with bold white tip to outer web forming a wing-bar; median coverts as greater coverts, but white tip continued narrowly onto inner web of inner feathers forming second wing-bar; lesser coverts greyish brown; scapulars as mantle, but a little warmer; underside of flight feathers silvery grey; underwing-coverts off white; narrow tract of white feathers from carpal joint along leading edge of wing. UNDERPARTS Narrow line of white feathers forming incomplete eye-ring below eye and extending up as far as eye-stripe; ear-coverts and lores uniform grey; chin greyish white;

throat, upper breast and anterior flanks uniform dove-grey; posterior flanks above thighs buff-brown; belly silky white, merging into greys of breast and anterior flanks; vent region ochre-buff; undertail-coverts more buff than around vent, and longest feathers with darker centres. BARE PARTS Bill pinkish orange, a little darker at tip of upper mandible. Eyes dark brown. Legs dark straw-brown; toes and soles a little darker; claws grey. MEASUREMENTS Wing 88mm; bill 13mm; tarsus 23mm; tail 75mm, central feathers 8.5mm longer than outer feathers; weight 28.1g. WING FORMULA 1st primary 10.5mm shorter than primary coverts; 4th longest, 2nd -3.5mm; 3rd -0.5mm; 5th -1mm; 6th -3mm; 7th -6.5mm; 8th -10mm; 9th -11mm; 10th -12.5mm; emargination on 3rd, 4th, 5th and slightly on 6th.

Hornsea Mere individual

At about 14.15 GMT on 22nd May 1977, R. G. Hawley, I. G. Howard and D. P. Sharp were observing birds at the southwest end of Hornsea Mere, North Humberside, when DPS drew attention to an unfamiliar bird. It was perched about 2m above the ground on the lowest branch of a black poplar *Populus nigra*, one of a belt of trees with reedswamp and mere behind and rough, permanent pasture in front. At first, the bird was watched for about 15 seconds, preening and apparently sunning itself, before it flew down to the ground, where it was hidden from view by grasses. After a few moments, it returned to the poplar, from which, after a few more seconds, it flew away low through a gap in the trees and was not seen again by the above observers.

In full sunlight, and at a distance of about 20m, the following main features were apparent. In size, it was thought to be a little larger than a Yellowhammer *Emberiza citrinella* and the head and bill appeared bunting-like. When perched, it sat rather upright, and the loose plumage of the underparts gave the impression of a body slightly too large for the size of the head. It appeared weak and fluttering in flight, with short, broad wings and a tail that was a little more than ample, but the most striking feature was the head, which was mostly white with black crown and eye-stripes and a pinkish bill. The underparts were pale grey, except on the belly and vent, which were white. The upperparts, including the tail, were grey-brown, and the wings, which were of a similar colour, showed reasonably striking, double white wing-bars.

A little later, about 15.00 GMT, the bird was seen by R. J. Walker and G. C. M. Yates in a group of crack willows *Salix fragilis*, on the edge of a reedswamp some 100m from the original position. It was observed down to approximately 8m as it moved about in the vegetation, and was continuously in view for over one minute, although, for part of the time, it was in light shade. During the following minute or two, it was seen briefly on two

occasions before it was finally lost to view in the vegetation. Several subsequent attempts to relocate it were unsuccessful.

The field notes from the two independent sightings were generally in agreement, although during the second, closer encounter it was possible to add some finer details. The following description is a summary of the individual notes:

HEAD All white, except for black stripe through eye, faint in front of eye, narrow immediately behind eye, then broadening towards nape; very narrow black band at forehead forming start of two black head-stripes, one on each side, narrow close to eye but lifting and broadening to rear of eye; at nape, black crown and eye-stripes apparently not meeting in any precise way, although this feature seen only briefly and feathers may have been ruffled. **UNDERPARTS** Throat, cheeks and ear-coverts pale grey (RGH) or brownish-grey (GCMY), grading into paler grey on breast and flanks; belly and undertail-coverts white; small dark patch (probably a feather gap) at vent noted on one occasion. **UPPERPARTS** Mantle pale grey tinged brown, with dark streaks a little broader than shaft (RGH) or honey-brown, streaked black or blackish (GCMY);

scapulars similar to mantle although a little browner, feathers with broad dark central area, GCMY noted these formed a noticeable feature: a bold, open-ended, V-line, reminiscent of an immature Little Stint *Calidris minuta*; feathers with dark centres and pale honey or buffish fringes; lower back, rump and uppertail-coverts unstreaked, uniform earth-brown, with warmish tone. **TAIL** Uniform earth-brown, a little darker than rump. **WINGS** Similar to tail, but tips to median and greater coverts almost white and forming striking double white wing-bars, clearly visible in flight; at close range, tips to tertials had dark centres and light buffish edges (GCMY). **BARE PARTS** Eyes dark; bill with pearly lustre or sheen, pink, tinged orange-yellow, darker at base; legs pinkish brown.

The bird was totally unfamiliar to the five observers, but, after discussion, they all agreed that it was one of the New World 'sparrows'. Only on reaching home was it possible to check the literature and positively identify the bird as a White-crowned Sparrow.

236. White-crowned Sparrow *Zonotrichia leucophrys*, USA, May 1978 (David Tomlinson)



Distribution of the species

The White-crowned Sparrow is a widely distributed breeding species in the New World, where it mainly frequents woody shrubbery and thickets in more open situations. It occurs from northern Alaska eastwards through much of Canada to Newfoundland and south in the United States to central Arizona and northern New Mexico. It is migratory and in winter may be found south to central Mexico, the Gulf coast of the United States and Cuba (Godfrey 1966).

Other Nearctic passerines in Britain in spring 1977

In the week between the discoveries of the two White-crowned Sparrows, two other Nearctic passerines were recorded in northern Britain: a male Yellow-rumped Warbler *Dendroica coronata* on Fair Isle on 18th May and a Slate-coloured Junco *Junco hyemalis* in Inverness-shire on 19th May (Rogers *et al.* 1978). Later, in mid June, a Cape May Warbler *Dendroica tigrina* was discovered in song at Paisley, Strathclyde (Byars & Galbraith 1980). The meteorological conditions at the time of this exceptional spring arrival have already been discussed by Elkins (1979).

Summary

Two White-crowned Sparrows *Zonotrichia leucophrys* were discovered in 1977, the first on Fair Isle, Shetland, on 15th May, and the second on 22nd May at Hornsea Mere, North Humberside. These records are the first and second of this Nearctic species in Britain and Ireland.

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Ray G. Hawley, The Bungalow, The Mere, Hornsea, North Humberside HU18 1AX

Fifty years ago . . .

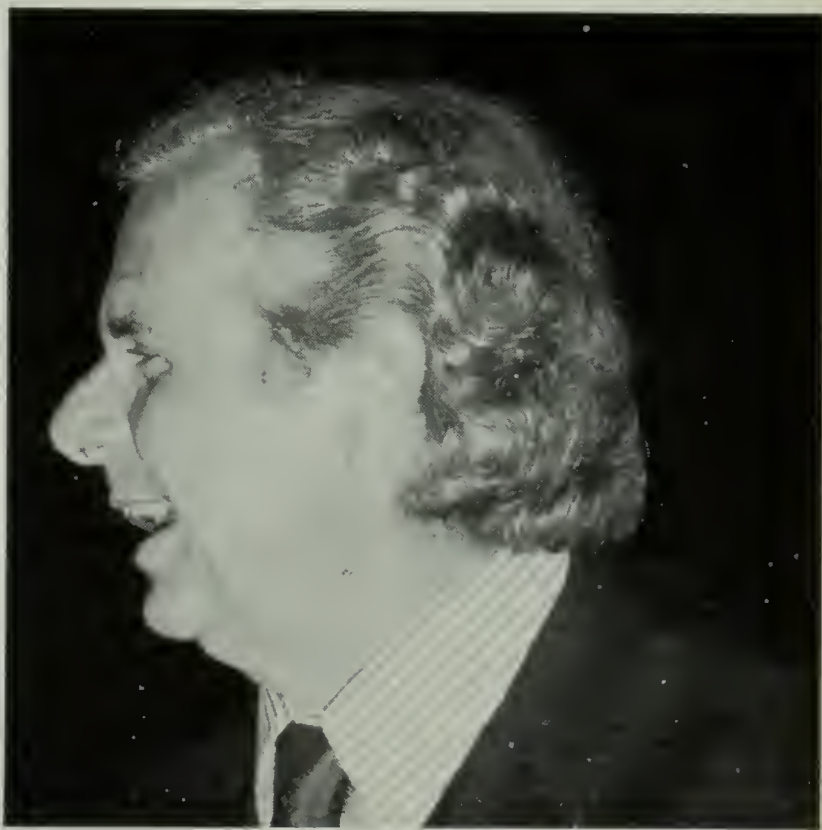
'LITTLE EGRET IN DEVONSHIRE. This Little Egret, then, if acknowledged as a wild bird, is the second definite record for this country, and also for Devon . . . W. WALMESLEY WHITE. [Unfortunately, it is difficult to accept as a genuinely wild example any record of such birds as Herons, Cranes and some of the rarer ducks. So many people keep these birds and either give them their liberty intentionally or allow them to escape, that it is becoming a frequent occurrence for such birds to be observed and recorded by ornithologists in the belief that they are wild . . . Eds.]' (*Brit. Birds* 24: 131-132, October 1930)

Obituary

Eric Reginald Parrinder, CBE (1914-1980)

E. R. Parrinder, who died aged 66 at his new home overlooking the marshes at Cley-next-the-Sea, Norfolk, on 20th June, was one of that formidable generation of amateur ornithologists which included such giants as the late James Fisher, R. C. Homes and a dozen others who come readily to mind. John—as he was known to everyone, despite his given names—has now joined them in whatever Valhalla awaits good bird people.

Never what could be described as a 'clubable' man, austere of manner, reserved with other than his closest friends, he was a highly successful quantity surveyor, awarded the CBE for services to his profession. At one time a member of 14 committees connected with his work, he nonetheless—like all busy and able men—was able to indulge his personal passion: for birds and their conservation.



237. E. R. (John) Parrinder (1914-1980)

His has been no mean record: editor of the *London Bird Report*, a chairman of the London Natural History Society, honorary treasurer of the BTO and of the RSPB, a member of this and that council, traveller and photographer, he did much original work. An intensive survey of London's Starling roosts which proved their—mainly—non-Continental origins was followed by a study with his wife, Eileen, of Stonechats in north Cornwall and, in more recent years, the collation of breeding records of the Little Ringed Plover, a bird of which he was intensely fond, and whose portraits by many leading artists adorned the walls of his kitchen at Cley.

Threaded through his life was a deep interest in migration—he helped to found the Dungeness Bird Observatory—and a love of travel. A member of one of Guy Mountfort's legendary expeditions to the Coto Doñana in Spain in the 1950s, he later travelled extensively throughout the Old and New

Worlds, and, within the past year or two, as a result of his friendship with the British Ambassador in Kabul, journeyed deep into Afghanistan, adding the White-winged Black Tern to that now unhappy country's records.

But it was on behalf of the causes of protection and conservation that he really left his mark. He had the unique distinction of serving the governing body of the RSPB, almost without interruption, for 24 years. First elected to its council in 1954, he worked as a member and chairman of what was then called the Watchers' Committee, and later chaired the Finance and General Purposes Committee, becoming hon. treasurer in 1969. Re-elected to its council after a year's break in 1976, he was chairman of the Conservation Committee until shortly before his death.

An immensely tough and resolute person, he bore with exemplary fortitude the cancer that struck him soon after he retired and moved from Kent to the house he built as near as possible to the edge of one of his favourite reserves; but it was clear, when he attended the RSPB Members' Annual Conference in York during March, that he was gravely ill. 'He served his birds well' is the epitaph by which John Parrinder will long be remembered by all of us who knew him and worked with him.

DEREK BARBER

Mystery photographs

46 No prizes for the fact that the bird in plate 212 (repeated here at reduced size) is a bird of prey, or indeed that it is a falcon *Falco*. It is soaring around high overhead, there is nothing for size comparison, and you are feeling somewhat bewildered. What are the possibilities?

Although it is rather broad winged, probably the first species that comes to mind is Hobby *F. subbuteo*, for it is streaked below, has a somewhat chequered underwing, narrowly barred tail and dark moustachial streaks. The plumage, however, is not quite right, the bird showing, among other features, less streaking below and rather dark underwing-coverts. After soaring around with ease for a few minutes, the bird moves off, making one or two leisurely wing-beats. At this point, your suspicion that the bird is larger and broader-winged than a Hobby is confirmed; it also lacks the dash and urgency of that species. Its bulk alone also rules out Red-footed Falcon *F. vespertinus*. It can not be a Peregrine *F. peregrinus*: it has not got the bulk in the chest, nor breadth of wing base, and the head pattern and moustachial lobes are too weak. Well, what about Lanner *F. biarmicus*? Now that's a little more difficult; after all, our bird is clearly larger than a Hobby and has a rather





238 & 239. Mystery photographs 47. Name the goose species. Answer next month



relaxed flight, but is it large enough, and when it soars do its wings frequently take on a slight upward swing so often seen in Lanner? No they don't. The moustachial streak is also too strong for that species (and also for Saker *F. cherrug*). One is then left, by a process of elimination, with Eleonora's Falcon *F. eleonorae*. One should not be ashamed at reaching that conclusion by ruling out other species in the first instance, for immature Eleonora's Falcons are notoriously difficult to identify if you have never seen them before. The young do not show the comparatively long and narrow wings and long tail of adults, and the main clues to the bird's identity are its medium size, the darkness of its underwing-coverts, its relatively strong moustachial streak, a gingery tinge to the plumage (especially the tail as the sun shines through it), and that characteristic flight. When high overhead, it really is a leisurely bird, with peculiarly relaxed wing-beats, the whole action being slower than one would expect of a falcon of this size: it can remain in the air for several minutes without a wing-beat. Beware though, for, when hunting, this species takes on great speed and agility, and the wing-beats then become fast and flexible.

Observers on holiday in southern Eurasia, particularly southeastern Turkey, should be aware of this immature. Small parties or singles can turn up almost anywhere on islands and coastal haunts during the summer and autumn and I can remember (mis)identifying my first one—over a Turkish peninsula in May 1966—as a Lanner! The individual in plate 212 was photographed by P. R. Flint in Cyprus in October 1971. R. F. PORTER

Notes

Identification problem produced by Leach's Petrel in moult

During a southwesterly gale on 29th September 1978, I observed a procession of Leach's Petrels *Oceanodroma leucorhoa* struggling to get out of Morecambe Bay, Lancashire. About two-thirds of the way through the 92-bird seawatch, a strange looking petrel approached the jetty in close association with a presumed juvenile Leach's Petrel (with a well-marked greater-covert bar). The odd bird appeared noticeably round-winged and consequently straighter-forewinged than a typical Leach's; its tail appeared to be shorter and more square-ended than Leach's; and it possessed the faintest greater-covert bar of all the petrels seen that day: rather like a 'typical' Storm Petrel *Hydrobates pelagicus* and thus invisible at a range of over 100m. Any excitement was dampened by the fact that it was obviously the same size as the accompanying Leach's Petrel and their white rumps appeared identical. It also displayed the 'balancing-act' of wing-hanging and occasional foot-paddling (and opportunist feeding) characteristic of this species when flying into a gale. The underwing was all-dark.

Fortunately, the bird was very close inshore and eventually I was able to observe it flying some 5m below me off the end of the jetty. At this near-perfect angle, I was able to see a gap in the wing about halfway along the secondaries and note the tail as scruffy and irregular: characteristic of active moult. The faint greater-covert bar was patchy and irregular, consistent with either extremely worn old feathers, partially grown new ones or feather absence. The round wings were still obvious, but could surely be explained by a bird still re-growing its outer primaries.

The problem of identification had this petrel been alone and at long range are self-evident.

PETER MARSH

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Periodically, we publish examples of aberrant plumage-coloration causing identification problems. Individuals in active moult, such as those described by Peter Marsh (above) and discussed by F. M. Gauntlett, Lars Larsson and Robin Prytherch (pages 481-482), can be equally confusing. EDS

Interspecific copulation between Slender-billed and Black-headed Gulls

On 10th May 1978, while photographing a mixed flock of Slender-billed *Larus genei*, Little *L. minutus* and Black-headed Gulls *L. ridibundus* near



Figs. 1-5. Interspecific copulation between Slender-billed *Larus genei* and Black-headed Gull *L. ridibundus*, France, May 1978 (see text) (R. E. Jones)

Salin de Giraud in the Camargue, France, A. R. Johnson, P. E. Newbery, J. M. Jones and I saw a female Black-headed Gull approach a Slender-billed in the typical lowered head posture usually adopted by paired females in the presence of their mates (fig. 1). It then pecked at the latter's bill, all the while keeping a slightly submissive posture (figs. 2 & 3). The Slender-billed responded by mounting the Black-headed Gull and copulating (figs. 4 & 5). We were unable to stay longer to establish if the two gulls were permanently paired, but no mixed pairs have been seen subsequently (ARJ). We all considered this to be probably a case of casual copulation, and assumed that the Black-headed was a female and the Slender-billed a male (although reversed copulation is not unknown in birds). The question arises as to what behavioural or plumage characteristics were involved in enticing the female to approach the male. One would have thought that a dark hood would have been necessary to elicit this type of response from the female, although earlier in the season this feature could be lacking. The Slender-billed male, however, would never meet a dark hood in its own species at any time of the year. The figures show the marked differences in profile and size between the two species, which would presumably be even more obvious to the gulls themselves. J. H. Taverner (*Brit. Birds* 63: 67-79) quoted similar cases of Mediterranean Gulls *L. melanocephalus* paired with Common Gulls *L. canus* in East Germany and with Black-headed Gulls in Hampshire. In the Camargue, Slender-billed Gulls have nested in mixed Gull-billed Tern *Gelochelidon nilotica* and Black-headed Gull colonies.

R. E. JONES

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Herring Gulls catching greater pipe-fishes During periods of fresh to strong southwest or west winds in May in the four years 1976-79, off Chesil Beach, Dorset, I have seen Herring Gulls *Larus argentatus* catching greater pipe-fishes *Syngnathus acus* close inshore. Apparently these are brought close in and near the surface by rough seas at this time of the year. They are then easily caught by the gulls, which have often been observed carrying the fishes, still alive. Aerial chases sometimes ensue, but no Herring Gulls have been seen to eat the fish that they were carrying, and no other bird species has been seen taking advantage of this prey. The Herring Gulls catch the fishes by alighting on the water and grabbing them as they swim just below the surface, or by plunge-diving on them if they are swimming a little deeper.

C. E. RICHARDS

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Field-characters of Desert and Bar-tailed Desert Larks Dr J. T. R. Sharrock recently drew attention to the poorly documented distinctions between the Desert Lark *Ammomanes deserti* and the Bar-tailed Desert Lark *A. cincturus* (*Brit. Birds* 73: 29-30), and briefly summarised his impressions of the important structural differences by comparing the former with a pipit *Anthus* and the latter with a finch (Fringillidae). The impression frequently given in the literature that the Desert Lark's lack of a tailband forms an isolated, diagnostic difference from the Bar-tailed Desert Lark can be misleading.

When colleagues and I encountered Desert Larks in Morocco during April 1976, we were surprised to observe that noticeable darkening in the tail, particularly towards the tip, was displayed by many individuals. Although never approaching in blackness or precise demarcation the distinctive tailband of the Bar-tailed Desert Lark, the resulting suggestion of a terminal band was initially disconcerting. Subsequent experience of both species revealed their very different characters: like Dr Sharrock, we found that the essential character of each resulted more from structural than from plumage features.

Fundamentally, the Bar-tailed Desert Lark is smaller and neater, with a shorter, finer bill and a differently shaped head. The nape is comparatively high, with the peak of the crown often appearing well behind the eye. The tail is rather short and narrow, and extends a relatively short distance beyond the tips of the folded wings. The Desert Lark is much less economically proportioned: it has a longer and heavier bill, a low crown, with the peak usually above the eye, and a longer tail, which extends conspicuously beyond the tips of the folded wings. Perhaps associated with these structural differences, the Bar-tailed Desert Lark frequently adopts a more upright stance, even recalling a chat. On such occasions, its rather spindly legs become evident.

The considerable variation in colour among Desert Larks precludes diagnostic plumage characters, but, in addition to the points described by Dr Sharrock, we noted the rather loose, coarse feathering, showing obvious texture, and the hint of a pale bar across the folded wing, formed by marginally paler tips to the greater coverts. The Bar-tailed Desert Lark has finer, sleeker feathering, which produces a better-groomed appearance.

The upper breast is of similar colour to the upperparts (a warm cinnamon-rufous) and forms a gorget contrasting with the much whiter lower breast and belly.

A. R. DEAN

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Casting of pellets by young Robins In 1978, in my garden at Welwyn Garden City, Hertfordshire, a pair of Robins *Erithacus rubecula* built in an open-fronted nestbox about 1½ m from, and facing, my kitchen window. When the young were four days old, my husband and I saw the adult remove a white pellet from the gape of one of them. This happened on a number of subsequent occasions, and my son also observed it. I have also noted a faecal sac being removed by the parent.

MAUREEN CRIPS

14 The Links, Welwyn Garden City, Hertfordshire

In 1977, at Welwyn Garden City, I made a very detailed study of three nests of a Robin in two open-fronted nestboxes in my garden. During 17½ hours' observation between 23rd June and 2nd July, I recorded the number of white pellets removed by the parents. Some of these were not the faecal type, but came from the gapes of the young. On one occasion, the parent, having missed the pellet which the young discharged down the front of the nest, retrieved and immediately ate it. My wife and son have also witnessed the same pellet ejection.

J. L. CORFIELD

15 Mannicotts, Welwyn Garden City, Hertfordshire

Many passerines, particularly insectivorous species and including the Robin, do cast pellets (e.g. *Brit. Birds* 25: 332; 38: 50-52; 45: 98-101; 72: 38-39), but the whiteness noted in these observations is most unexpected. The possibility that a faecal sac ejected by one nestling near to the head of another nestling has been mistaken for an orally-ejected pellet seems to be eliminated in view of these independent and frequent observations. The possibility that the parent Robins were in fact removing some white object they had fed to their young, but which the latter had found unpalatable and not swallowed, should, however, perhaps not be entirely discounted. We shall welcome any similar observations (with photographs if possible). Eds

Firecrests mimicking song of Goldcrest In 1962, in Hampshire, I recorded instances of Firecrests *Regulus ignicapillus* singing songs identical to that of the Goldcrest *R. regulus* (*Brit. Birds* 59: 240). On 14th-15th May 1971, in north Hampshire, I found three singing Firecrests, one of which consistently used the Goldcrest song; on one occasion I counted at least ten consecutive songs before it reverted to its own song for a similar sequence. I watched this individual at very close range, and its song was subsequently recorded on tape by Dr G. Fisher. On 22nd May 1972, in the New Forest, Hampshire, one Firecrest was almost certainly 'Goldcresting' intermittently, and on 31st May I saw it clearly singing indistinguishably from a typical Goldcrest. On 6th July 1974, in a plantation of oaks *Quercus* in the New Forest, I heard both songs so consistently that I thought both species must be present; but later I had excellent views of a Firecrest and, during a period of about five minutes, I recorded its songs in the following sequence: 14 'Goldcrest' songs, 4 Firecrest, 4 'Goldcrest', 2 Firecrest, 4 'Goldcrest', then several short bursts of each song.

The most extreme example I have heard was on 3rd April 1977, when I found a Firecrest singing a steady and extremely accurate Goldcrest song. I again had excellent views of the singer and, during ten minutes, only twice did it use its own song.

M. C. ADAMS

33 Greenfields Avenue, Totton, Hampshire

Caution needs to be exercised in assessing what is true mimicry and what is not. In the Pyrénées, for example, Chiffchaffs *Phylloscopus collybita* sing quite like Willow Warblers *P. trochilus*, and 'chiff-chaff' song elsewhere is presumably kept discrete by character displacement. This may apply similarly in the case of the Firecrests. EDS

Male Blue Tit accompanying sick female At about 07.00 GMT on 18th April 1978, at Tring, Hertfordshire, I noticed two Blue Tits *Parus caeruleus* sitting on a path in my garden. Although I was standing within 3m of them, they made no move to fly away. Observing more closely, I saw that they were about 30 cm apart, and that there appeared to be a small feather in the beak of one, whose plumage was more ruffled. My first interpretation was that they were males engaged in a territorial dispute which my presence had interrupted, and I walked slowly towards them, curious to see how close an approach they would tolerate. To my surprise I was able to pick up first the nearer one, a brightly plumaged individual, and then the duller, fluffier one. Both were wearing rings, the brighter one a male first ringed as a juvenile in 1973, the duller a first-winter female. It was obvious that the female was sick: dried droppings were adhering to her vent, and she lay quietly in my hand. I released the male first, and he flew less than 1 m to settle in a branch above my head; he did not call. When I released the female, she flew weakly and eventually settled on a greenhouse. While I watched her, the male must have moved, possibly to a nearby holly *Ilex aquifolium*, for I could not find him again and, in the process, I lost contact with the female. With the possible exception of the fact that he was silent, there was absolutely nothing to suggest that the male was anything but a normal, healthy Blue Tit. If so, it would appear that the strength of the pair bond was such as to override his natural inclination to fly.

ROBERT SPENCER

British Trust for Ornithology, Beech Grove, Tring, Hertfordshire HP23 5NR

Magpie attempting to kill Starling, and resilience of Starlings On 14th May 1978, at Chasewater, Staffordshire, I saw a Magpie *Pica pica* attacking a Starling *Sturnus vulgaris*. The latter lay on its back with the Magpie standing on top. They were beside a fence on which several other Starlings were perched, all calling loudly; for a while, these swooped at the Magpie, but they later lost interest. The Magpie pecked vigorously at the struggling Starling with hard, downward stabs, its bill slightly open on impact; it often pulled out a few feathers. The Starling had a firm grip with one foot on the Magpie's leg. This continued for at least four minutes, the assailant overbalancing at times, then both fell over a small bank, where the Magpie resumed its attack, but with frequent pauses in the vicious pecking. Suddenly, it hopped away, and the Starling, to my great surprise after such a battering, stood up, looked around and flew out across the reservoir. After a few metres, however, it hit the water, and eventually drowned. I collected

the corpse and found the sides of its gape slightly damaged, but not bleeding; the whole of its thighs and part of its flanks and belly were plucked bare, but no skin was broken and there was no trace of blood and no sign of previous disability.

This surprising resilience of the Starling recalled a similar incident at Blackpill, West Glamorgan, on 18th July 1973. I saw a Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus* standing on a Starling on the open beach, the Starling gripping its captor's leg. The hawk often flew up about a metre with the Starling in its feet and landed hard on top of it; after several minutes, it had plucked most of the breast, but had still not killed the Starling. Eventually it flew off, leaving the Starling, feeble but still fluttering, in shallow water. A Carrion Crow *Corvus corone* settled by it and struck a vicious-looking blow in its head, but the Starling reared up and the crow left. Even after the lengthy assault by the hawk and a peck on the head by the crow, the Starling was still alive, but it eventually drowned as the tide rose around it. I have also disturbed a Sparrowhawk from a partly plucked, screaming Starling which flew away strongly.

Magpies have been recorded killing and eating a Song Thrush *Turdus philomelos* when also mobbed by other birds (*Brit. Birds* 59: 309), preying on roosting Tree Sparrows *Passer montanus* (*Brit. Birds* 58: 150-151), killing a juvenile, weak-flying Reed Bunting *Emberiza schoeniclus* (*Brit. Birds* 60: 253-254), a Swift *Apus apus* (*Brit. Birds* 71: 363) and a Water Rail *Rallus aquaticus* (*Brit. Birds* 40: 210), in the last case battering the skull of the victim.

R. A. HUME

31 Lime Grove, Burntwood, Walsall WS7 0HA

Ravens nesting on electricity pylons On 1st May 1978, in an inland area of north Cornwall, an Electricity Board linesman showed us an unusual nest site of a Raven *Corvus corax*: on a grid-line pylon, at the end of a 60-foot (18.3m) high lower arm, a few sticks were showing and one young Raven was sitting close by. The linesman allowed me to climb to the first arm. At the end of the arm, where the main cross member was bolted to an angle brace by plates, there was a good sheltered recess, in which the Ravens had built their nest. There were two young still in the nest, and the one sitting out on the arm was later seen to fly. The linesman said that he knew of another similar site farther along the line. He had known of Kestrels *Falco tinnunculus* using the pylons in other regions, and occasional Carrion Crows *C. corone* using them, but this was the first year that he had found Ravens nesting on pylons.

TIMOTHY J. DINGLE

Scadghill Cottage, Stibb, Bude, Cornwall

Cause of death of Goldfinches During the enquiry into the effects of toxic pesticides in 1960, the corpse of a Goldfinch *Carduelis carduelis* was sent to me for examination. Its bill was completely sealed by a blob of dark rubbery matter, which the finder had assumed was tar that the finch had picked up when searching for grit on a newly surfaced road. It was in fact the congealed latex from dandelion *Taraxacum officinale*. Judging from the number of Goldfinches whose bills I have scraped clean of this material,

having caught them with dandelion heads as bait among concentrations of this plant, this fate could overtake any bird of this species which failed to wipe its beak thoroughly before going to roost.

W. D. CAMPBELL

Ticknell Corner, The Slade, Charlbury, Oxford

Two female Bullfinches incubating on one nest On 10th June 1979, in a small plantation of pines *Pinus* at Delph, Oldham, Lancashire, I found the nest of a Bullfinch *Pyrrhula pyrrhula* about 1.7m up in a small pine. It contained eight eggs. On 11th, there were nine eggs and, after closer scrutiny, I noticed that six had a pale blue base and three an even lighter shade; it thus seemed probable that two females were involved. For the next five days, only one male and one female were seen, but on 17th June two females returned to the nest; after a little pushing and shoving to obtain the best incubation position, both females settled on the clutch. Over the next few days, from a hide, I obtained a batch of transparencies (see plate 240).



240. Two female Bullfinches *Pyrrhula pyrrhula* on one nest, Lancashire, June 1979 (I. H. Dale)

During the incubation period, the male would return to the nest area at approximately one-hour intervals, after foraging locally for food; at about 10m from the nest site he would alight in a large hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna* and call off the females with a soft, low, piping note. Only one female would approach the male at any one time, the other continuing to incubate. The female would take a submissive posture and flutter her wings, which would encourage the male to regurgitate his crop of semi-digested seeds. Once the first female had been fed, she would return to the nest, and the second would commence the same ritual. Only on odd occasions would both females leave the nest at the same time to be fed. Once, after the first female had been fed, she returned to the nest and fed the other female by the same method as the male. On 22nd June, very near hatching day, I had to stop my observations. Unfortunately, when I returned on 1st July, the nest was completely empty, a predator having presumably taken the eggs or the newly hatched young.

I. H. DALE

4 Cheetham Street, Shaw, Oldham, Lancashire OL2 8PW

Letters

Mystery photograph: Black Kite or Honey Buzzard? Reference 'Mystery photograph' number 33 (*Brit. Birds* 72: 434, plate 204): I identified it as a Black Kite *Milvus migrans* without a moment's (well, five seconds') hesitation. Having spent three years in India, where this species is one of the three most obvious members of the avifauna and the sky is seldom without some kites, 100,000 bird-days would be a fair estimate of my experience of them.

The lazy flex of the wings is typical and so is the tail, and, while this is explained as moult, I have never seen it on other birds of prey; I have, however, seen the converse: moulting Black Kites showing peculiar graduated tails with new outer feathers shorter than the inner. The tips of the tail forks also appear to be pointed, which again is a kite characteristic, whereas individual buzzard tail feathers are rounded and symmetrical. I also submit that a Honey Buzzard *Pernis apivorus* in moult with short or absent central tail feathers would not show any notch, unless the tail was spread, due to the overlap of the feathers. The bird in the photograph has its tail firmly closed.

My experience of the Honey Buzzard or the Crested Honey Buzzard *P. (a.) ptilorhynchus* is more limited, but my objection to that identification is that the wing shape lacks the narrow base due to the shorter inner secondaries which I have found such a typical feature of that species.

F. M. GAUNTLETT

55 Larkfield Avenue, Kenton, Harrow, Middlesex HA3 8NQ

'Mystery photograph 33' shows that primaries 4 and 5 (or 5 and 6), counted in a descendant order, are missing. The literature suggests that, before migration, Honey Buzzards renew, at most, their three innermost primaries. Although the tiny head and slender neck of the mystery bird remind one of a Honey Buzzard, the moult pattern is more in concordance with a moulting Black Kite.

LARS LARSSON

Pennygången 3, S-41482 Göteborg, Sweden

In his exposé of 'Mystery photograph 33', S. C. Madge revealed that the Rarities Committee had mixed opinions as to its identity as either a Honey Buzzard or a Black Kite. I am disappointed that six (a majority) of the Committee thought that it was a moulting Honey Buzzard, because I am 100% certain that it was a Black Kite.

I agree with S. C. Madge that the shallowness of the tail fork matches a picture book Black Kite, but I also think that it *does* have some of the 'feel' of this species—the wings bowed slightly forward, for example—and not the least 'feel' of a Honey Buzzard. Yes, the tiny pointed head is fine for Honey Buzzard, but Black Kite also has a proportionately small head. Plate 204 shows the bird from below and going away, a view which would accentuate the forward projection of the head. So far as the wing moult is concerned, surely S. C. Madge is mistaken. Primaries 6 and 7 are 'missing' but 8 to 10

(the inner ones) are present, and this reveals a vital clue which I will come to later. He also suggests that 'incompletely regrown central tail feathers would give a notched [forked] effect, particularly when the tail was closed'. Not necessarily so, and this is where my case for Black Kite really begins.

Photographs in *British Birds* 64 (1971) provided all the information that I needed: Honey Buzzard (64: plates 41 and 42) and Black Kite (64: plates 66b-67). The fork in the tail of a Black Kite is not formed solely by the outer feathers being longer than the central ones but as much by the *shape* of the tips of the outer feathers, which are pointed (64: plate 66b). The Honey Buzzard has rounded and flattened tips to its tail feathers so that, even if the central feathers were missing, the resulting shape would not give the 'picture book' fork shown in plate 204. I maintain that a fork (or notch) would not be apparent on such a tightly closed tail. Even if a gap did show, the corners of the tail would look more rounded (plates 41c and 42c) and not pointed.

It is fortunate that the mystery bird is in wing moult. Even though the photograph is rather poor, it is possible to count the outer primaries and to see that the 5th primary has a clean *straight* trailing edge (revealed by the absence of the 6th and 7th primaries). There is a striking similarity to plate 67a (even allowing for the difference in stance). Black Kites have five fully emarginated primaries (deep notches on both webs), with a shallower notch on the outer web of the 6th. Honey Buzzards, on the other hand, have only the first *four* primaries fully emarginated, with the 5th emarginated less deeply on the outer web and much reduced on the inner web, the 6th with no emargination at all (or perhaps a little on the outer web). If the 6th was missing, this would reveal the shape of the inner web of the 5th, showing a notch not far in and a sudden widening, giving a wavy appearance to the trailing edge rather than a straight line. On wing formula alone, therefore, the bird in plate 204 is clearly a Black Kite and this, together with the other points that I have made, should convince all.

Lastly, my investigations have revealed an additional identification point which I have not seen referred to elsewhere. The details I have given for the primaries of the two species mean that, in normal soaring flight, seen from below, a Honey Buzzard will show four good slots—gaps between the outer primaries—as in plate 42b, whereas a Black Kite shows five (plates 67b and c). The Red Kite *M. milvus*, incidentally, also shows only four.

ROBIN PRYTHERCH

21 Victoria Square, Clifton, Bristol BS8 4ES

This record has now been reassessed by the Rarities Committee in the light of the opinions expressed in these three letters, and particularly the moult evidence. The Committee now accepts the record as referring to a Black Kite. EDS

Directory of ornithological tours

As a service to subscribers, we are listing, under continents and countries, commercial bird tours planned for 1981. The details are those supplied to us by the firms concerned and we leave it entirely to potential partici-

pants to obtain from them the further information (such as prices, detailed itineraries and names of accompanying ornithological leaders) necessary to make a choice between the available alternatives.

Africa

GAMBIA	31st October—15th November	Sunbird
	6th-21st November	Ornitholidays
KENYA	4th-26th March	Sunbird
	12th-27th October	Ornitholidays
	21st October—12th November	Sunbird
MADAGASCAR	7th-17th November	Sunbird
MALAWI	27th July—15th August	Ornitholidays
MOROCCO	14th-28th April	Birdguide
	18th April—2nd May	Sunbird
SEYCHELLES	4th-20th October	Ornitholidays
SOUTH AFRICA	1st-18th October	Sunbird
TANZANIA	19th September—4th October	Ornitholidays
ZIMBABWE	8th-24th July	Ornitholidays
ZIMBABWE AND BOTSWANA	3 weeks in July	Heritage

America

CANADA		
Vancouver and the Rockies	7th-24th June	Ornitholidays
COLOMBIA	23rd July—6th August	Birdguide
ECUADOR AND THE GALAPAGOS	18th July—15th August	Sunbird
GUYANA AND TRINIDAD (see also Trinidad)	18 days September	Peregrine
MEXICO	1st-20th April	Birdguide
	7th-24th November	Sunbird
TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO	10th-25th January	Ornitholidays
(see also Guyana)	14th-28th February	Birdguide
UNITED STATES		
Alaska	14th June—4th July	Sunbird
Arizona and New Mexico	29th August—13th September	Ornitholidays
California	11th-26th September	Sunbird
California and Arizona	11th-27th May	Sunbird
Florida	9th-25th April	Ornitholidays
Florida (including Dry Tortugas), Cuba and Jamaica	6th-22nd March	Birdguide
Mid-Atlantic States, Cape May, Hawk Mountain, etc.	17th September—1st October	Birdguide
Texas	26th March—12th April	Birdguide
	26th April—13th May	Sunbird

Asia

INDIA AND NEPAL (see also Nepal)	6th-23rd February	Peregrine
	7th-28th February	Sunbird
	24th October—14th November	Sunbird
ISRAEL	About 16th-29th March	Heritage
	30th March—13th April	BB/Sunbird
	2nd-16th April	Sunbird
JORDAN	17th April—2nd May	Birdguide
MALAYSIA	11th-28th February	Peregrine
NEPAL (see also India)	8th-22nd March	Ornitholidays
SIBERIA AND MONGOLIA	21st May—9th June	Sunbird
	28th May—16th June	Sunbird

SRI LANKA	6th-22nd February	Ornitholidays
	6th-20th March	Sunbird
THAILAND	21st January—7th February	Sunbird
TURKEY	16th May—6th June	Sunbird
	19th-27th September	Sunbird

Australasia

NEW GUINEA	5th-30th August	Sunbird
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Europe

AUSTRIA		
Lake Neusiedl	10th-24th May	Ornitholidays
	6th-15th August	Sunbird
	23rd August—6th September	Ornitholidays
High Alps	6th-20th June	Ornitholidays
	1st-15th August	Ornitholidays
FRANCE		
Camargue	16th -30th May	Ornitholidays
Camargue and Pyrénées	14th-23rd May	Sunbird
Pyrénées (French and Spanish) (see also Spain)	About 8th-19th June	Heritage
GREECE		
Corfu	20th-27th April	Peregrine
	27th-4th May	Peregrine
Crete	About 27th March—10th April	Peregrine
	9th-23rd April	Peregrine
	About 24th May—7th June	Peregrine
Northern Greece	7th-17th May	Sunbird
	20th-30th August	Sunbird
Northeastern Greece	3rd-17th May	Ornitholidays
ROMANIA		
Danube Delta	3rd-17th May	Ornitholidays
SPAIN		
Andalucia	22nd-29th March	Peregrine
Mallorca	12th-26th April	Ornitholidays
	26th April—3rd May	Sunbird
	27th September—11th October	Ornitholidays
Southern Spain	1st-10th May	Sunbird
Southwest Spain	25th April—9th May	Ornitholidays
	12th-26th September	Ornitholidays
Pyrénées (see also France)	3rd-11th May	Ornitholidays
YUGOSLAVIA	25th April—9th May	Ornitholidays

All enquiries and queries should be directed to the travel firms concerned:
 Birdguide at Twickers World, 84 Hampton Road, Twickenham TW2 5QS.
 Tel. 01-898 8221.

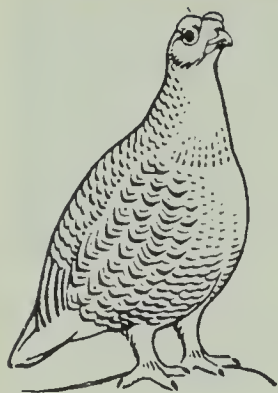
Heritage Travel, 22 Hans Place, London SW1X 0EP. Tel. 01-584 5201.

Ornitholidays, 1/3 Victoria Drive, Bognor Regis, West Sussex PO21 2PW.
 Tel. 0243 821230.

Peregrine Holidays, Town and Gown Travel, 40-41 South Parade, Summertown, Oxford OX2 7JP. Tel. 0865 511341.

Sunbird Holidays, Executive Travel (Holidays) Ltd, 141 Sloane Street, London SW1X 9BJ. Tel. 01-730 6609.

Announcements



'BB'-Sunbird Tour of Israel **30th March to 13th April 1981**

This special trip for *BB* subscribers will be led by Mark Beaman and Dr J. T. R. Sharrock. All arrangements are being handled by Sunbird Holidays and any proceeds will go entirely to *British Birds* to assist in providing an even better journal. For full details of the tour, please contact Sunbird Holidays, Executive Travel (Holidays) Ltd, 141 Sloane Street, London SW1X 9BJ (phone 01-730 6609).



Postal auction of cover design The original, unframed drawing of this month's cover design will be sold to the reader who sends the highest postal (or telegram) bid received by the last day of this month (unless the highest bid does not reach the artist's reserve price). The person making the successful bid will be informed and will be expected to supply, by return post, a cheque/PO for the sum bid, plus postage. The artist will receive 80% and *British Birds* will retain 20%. Send your name, address and telephone number and your bid (no money at this stage) to: October Cover Bid, Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3NJ.

National Exhibition of Cage and Aviary Birds The venue of the exhibition has been changed from that given in 'Diary dates' (*Brit. Birds* 73: 266); the new venue is Bingley Hall, Birmingham.

Requests

Movements of wader populations in western Europe: request for assistance Many of the waders for which western Europe is the major wintering area depend not on one but on a series of estuaries during the non-breeding season and so may be particularly susceptible to large-scale developments of wetlands. For their conservation, it is vital to know more about the patterns and timing of movements and the numbers involved. Accordingly, a study supported by the Nature Conservancy Council and the European Economic Community is being organised by the Wader Study Group and Durham University. This autumn and winter, waders of various species will be marked by colour-dyes and temporary leg flags in the large estuarine complexes of the Wattenmeer/Waddenzee (Denmark/Germany/Netherlands) and the Wash (England). While casual sightings of these marked birds will be very welcome, to obtain the most valuable information there should be frequent coverage of as many sites as possible (both where such birds are expected and where they are perhaps less likely to occur).

Anyone prepared to help by checking a site is requested to write as soon as possible to M. W. Pienkowski, Wader Study Group, Department of Zoology, University of Durham, South Road, Durham DH1 3LE. (Sightings of colour-marked waders sent to this address will also be forwarded to the relevant study if they do not concern the present one, as the Wader Study Group now maintains an international register of colour-marking schemes. When individual birds are traced, details of marking will be sent to those reporting sightings.)

YOC/BB Roving Tit Flocks Project We wish to remind readers that this project (announced in June, *Brit. Birds* 73: 267) is still in progress.



Anyone observing a roving flock of tits is asked to:

- (1) note the species comprising the flock: there may be Treecreepers *Certhia familiaris*, Goldcrests *Regulus regulus*, warblers (Sylviidae) and finches (Fringillidae), for example, as well as tits *Parus* & *Aegithalos*
- (2) note the numbers of each species
- (3) categorise the habitat simply as either (a) mainly coniferous woodland, (b) mainly deciduous woodland, or (c) hedgerow
- (4) record the county in which the observation was made
- (5) give the date of the observation

and send this information (preferably as a simple list, rather than as a letter), together with their name, address and age (if under 18) to the address at the end of this announcement. It would help if each observation of a different tit flock was submitted on a separate card or piece of paper.

Roving tit flocks are often noisy and easy to locate. They are less easy to count. We recommend that observers noting a roving flock should position themselves so that the birds in the flock can be identified and counted as they fly across a gap within woodland or in a hedge. The only real identification problem is likely to be Marsh *Parus palustris* and Willow Tits *P. montanus*. We recommend that observers record these merely as 'Marsh/Willow' unless they are absolutely certain of a specific identification, in which case their reasons must be stated in substantiation.

We hope that many *British Birds* readers, not just YOC members, will participate.

Lists on cards or sheets of paper should be submitted as soon as possible after 28th February 1981 and, in any case, before 31st March 1981, to: YOC/BB Project, *British Birds*, Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3XJ.

News and comment

Peter Conder and Mike Everett

Council for Europe honours Minsmere

The Council of Ministers of the Council of Europe awarded the 19th European Diploma to Minsmere Nature Reserve on 13th September 1979. This is only the second time that the European Diploma has been awarded to a protected landscape or nature reserve of European interest in the British Isles, the first being to the Peak District National Park in 1966. It is the first time that this Diploma has been awarded to a non-

governmental organisation. The Diploma is valid for five years and places the reserve under the sponsorship of the Council of Europe until 12th September 1984. On 10th July 1980, Franz Karasek, the Secretary-General of the Council for Europe, presented the Diploma to Lord Donaldson, President of the RSPB, at Minsmere, in the presence of a distinguished gathering. The RSPB, and in particular Herbert Axell, who master-minded the development of management on

this reserve, are to be congratulated on this prestigious achievement.

WWF Yearbook 1979-80 This issue records an important change at international headquarters: in the past, the offices of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature and the World Wildlife Fund have been in different parts of Morges, Switzerland. Now, they are together in the same building at Gland, also in Switzerland. Dr Lee M. Talbot, WWF Director of Conservation and Special Scientific Advisor, points out that, in future, WWF and IUCN will jointly determine the priorities and projects to be funded; no doubt these will be affected by the World Conservation Strategy, which presents a clear statement of global conservation priorities.

WWF support for international birds A substantial number of the 234 projects, absorbing \$3,876,796, involved birds. These projects included help for the captive breeding of Siberian White Crane *Grus leucogeranus*, Mauritius Pink Pigeon *Columba mayeri*, Mauritius Kestrel *Falco punctatus*, Mauritius Parakeet *Psittacula echo* and the Rodrigues Fody *Foudia flavicans*. Other projects involved the selection of breeding sites for the Bald Ibis *Geronticus eremita*, moving of Seychelles Magpie-Robins *Copsychus sechellarum* from Fregate to Aride Island in the Seychelles, the captive breeding of the Lammergeier *Gypaetus barbatus* in Austria, and the protection of the breeding places of the Black Vulture *Aegypius monachus* in Mallorca. White-tailed Eagles *Haliaeetus albicilla* in northern Europe, Griffon Vultures *Gyps fulvus* in Austria and Yugoslavia, Audouin's Gull *Larus audouinii* in the Mediterranean are among other species which benefit.

NCC concerned at the impact of forestry

The Nature Conservancy Council, in its evidence to the House of Lords Select Committee on Science and Technology, said that the recent proposals by the Forestry Commission for new afforestation have substantial implications for nature conservation in Britain. The planting targets certainly cannot be met without frequent and serious collision of interests over proposals to afforest land within key sites identified in *A Nature Conservation Review*. The probability is that, unless Government takes appropriate action, a large number of important sites will be

destroyed or seriously damaged within the next few decades.

. . . and agriculture The NCC is also concerned that the proposals of the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food for changes in their farm capital grants scheme will lead to the accelerated destruction of wildlife habitats throughout the country. The proposals mean that farmers will no longer have to seek prior approval for grant applications for field drainage, land clearance and so on, except in sensitive areas, such as sites of special scientific interest, and the onus is now on the farmers to find out if their land lies within a sensitive area and to consult the appropriate agency direct. In general, the NCC considers that the MAFF proposals place wildlife in the countryside at a greater risk than at present.

We can remember that, ten years ago, the then Minister of Agriculture committed his Ministry to a policy of integrating wildlife conservation with agriculture, and that successive Directors-General of the Forestry Commission were falling over themselves in their protestations that they had wildlife conservation at heart, and that conifer monocultures had not affected the distribution of the Stone-curlew *Burhinus oedipnemos* and other species in the Brecks, etc., etc. This was, of course, during European Conservation Year 1970, when many eyes were on them. Now, the Commission and MAFF are running true to form as, arguably, two of the most destructive forces to wildlife in Britain today. We are reminded of the Fairies' song in *A Midsummer-Night's Dream*: 'You spotted snakes with double-tongue . . .'

Minton down under Australian ornithologists are aiming to trace the flight-paths of a wide range of migrants, some of which have been shown to travel more than 8,000km (5,000 miles) in less than a month, by an intensive ringing scheme. Ringing is currently co-ordinated by the Australian Bird-Banding Scheme, which is administered by the Australian Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation. It works closely with the Yamashina Institute for Ornithology in Tokyo and hopes to establish links with similar institutes elsewhere in Asia. Of more than 1,700,000 birds ringed since the start of the scheme in 1953, about 140,000 rings have been returned from many places, including areas within the Arctic Circle, the Kuril and Aleutian Islands which stretch in an arc

between Asia and North America, from central and eastern USSR, China, Japan, Korea, Canada and the USA, various countries in Southeast Asia and the Pacific Islands. In Melbourne, a team led by Dr D. G. Robertson, a public servant, and Dr Clive Minton, a British company executive on a long-term posting to Australia, is cannon-netting and ringing waders, many of which breed in Siberia and migrate to Australia for the northern winter. Some pass through Japan on their way to and from Australia.

How did Clive manage to work that posting we wonder?

Wye NNR The NCC has announced that it has acquired by gift and purchase two further areas of outstanding chalk downland as extensions to the National Nature Reserve formerly called Wye and Crundale Downs NNR. The total area of the reserve is now 132 ha (326 acres).

Cyprus Ornithological Society (1957) The annual report of one of the two bird-watchers' societies in Cyprus has now been published, and the editorial by C. J. L. Bennett mentions the setback of the committee's hopes of re-unification of the two societies in 1976, but notes that tentative contacts were maintained with 'the other society' at presidential level. The bulk of the report (the price of which is not stated) consists of a chapter headed 'Sightings', equivalent to the systematic list of most county bird reports. Two first records for the island are of White-breasted Kingfisher *Halcyon smyrnensis* and Green Woodpecker *Picus viridis*. Squadron Leader R. Foers, RAF,

contributes an interim report of the 1977 census of Eleonora's Falcon *Falco eleonora* which he undertook with Professor H. Walter for the University of California. A conservative estimate of the total is between 85 and 100 pairs. The address of the Cyprus Ornithological Society (1957) is PO Box 2065, Nicosia, Cyprus.

Birds of Lindisfarne The Tyneside Bird Club has produced a list of birds of Lindisfarne: the first since one in Richard Perry's *A Naturalist on Lindisfarne* (1946). The present list, compiled by Ian Kerr, is confined to birds recorded in the Lindisfarne NNR and Holy Island, which attract many bird-watchers. Since 1946, when 256 species and subspecies were recorded, the total number of species has risen to 281. The 36-page booklet can be obtained (£1.25, including packing and postage) from the Tyneside Bird Club, 5 Bath Terrace, Tynemouth, Tyne & Wear.

Henry Douglas-Home The 'Birdman', the title by which he was known to his BBC listeners, and which he used for the title of his recent book, died at the age of 72 in July. Henry Douglas-Home started broadcasting with talks on bird song in the 1930s and, from then on, became a regular broadcaster on nature programmes, particularly in Scotland. His home for many years was the Hirsell in Midlothian, where his brother, Alec, the former Prime Minister, also lived and the grounds of which he turned into a bird reserve. He erected large numbers of nest-boxes and particularly concentrated on attempting to attract Swifts *Apus apus*.

Opinions expressed in this feature are not necessarily those of the editors of British Birds

Recent reports

K. Allsopp and R. A. Hume

These are largely unchecked reports, not authenticated records

This report covers July and the first week of August; except where otherwise stated, all dates refer to July.

The unsettled weather throughout June continued into July and temperatures were generally below average, with the dominant air mass coming from the north and west.

From 22nd until early August, an anti-cyclone developed over western Europe and rather warmer air was pulled in on the resulting east to southerly winds; conditions were, however, still unsettled, with frequent thunderstorm activity developing.



241. Adult summer curlew Sandpiper *Calidris ferruginea*, Kent, July 1980 (R. J. Chandler)

Wading birds

The combination of easterlies across Europe and frequent frontal activity over the British Isles during the latter part of July resulted in a good showing of the early return passage of the Arctic waders. Adult **Curlew Sandpipers** *Calidris ferruginea*, the majority still in summer plumage (plate 241), arrived in southeast England, with 30 at Cley (Norfolk), 15 at Cliffe (Kent) and smaller parties at inland reservoirs. **Wood Sandpipers** *Tringa glareola* were also more numerous than in recent autumns: 20 was a conservative estimate of the numbers at Cley, with, again, small numbers at many inland sites. In northeast England and in Scotland, the prominent species were **Purple Sandpipers** *Calidris maritima*, with 22 on Fair Isle on 22nd followed by 50 at Filey Brigg (North Yorkshire) on 31st, and **Knots** *C. canutus*, with 127 moving south on 26th, again at Filey Brigg, and, in addition, parties of 65 in Orkney on 27th and 16 on Fair Isle (Shetland) on 25th.

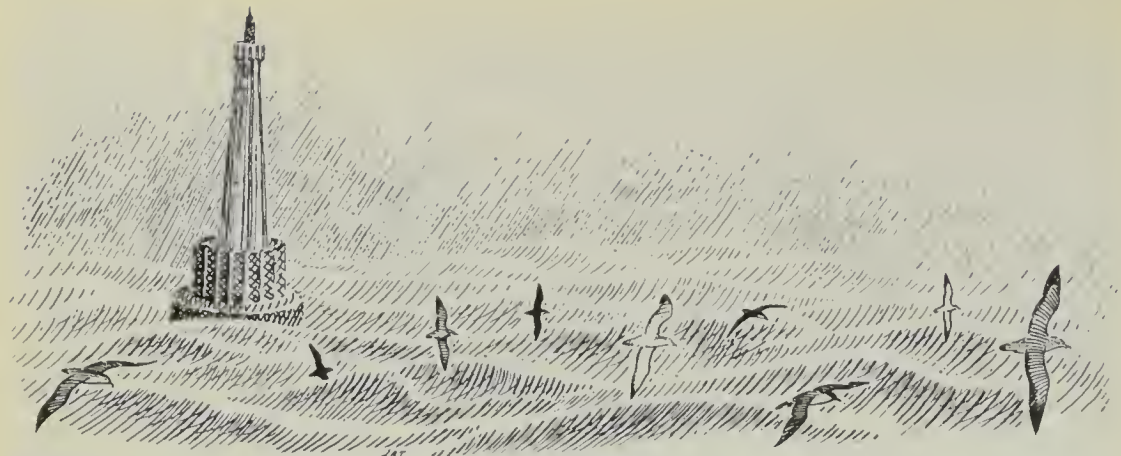
Common Sandpipers *Actitis hypoleucos* were very numerous, with 107 being counted at Abberton Reservoir (Essex) on 30th; and

Little Ringed Plovers *Charadrius dubius* also made an early departure, 50 collecting at Rainham (Essex) on 11th. At Sandwich Bay (Kent), further records of **Kentish Plover** *C. alexandrinus* were of one on 14th and two on 20th to 22nd, after the two, reported in the last 'Recent reports', on 5th and 6th. Single **Pectoral Sandpipers** *Calidris melanotos* at Rutland Water (Leicestershire) on 19th and 20th and at Pagham (West Sussex) on 26th and 27th were not unusual, but an influx of

five **White-rumped Sandpipers** *C. fuscollois*, all on the British east coast and earlier than usual, was notable: Teesmouth (Cleveland) on 26th, Cliffe at the end of July and Musselburgh (Lothian) in early August, with two at Cley on 1st to 6th August. The timing of their arrival—with probably non-breeding Palearctic waders—suggests that these Nearctic birds had not made a recent transatlantic crossing. A **Black-winged Stilt** *Limantopus limantopus* was still reported in Kent in mid month, and a late interesting record was of a **Temminck's Stint** *Calidris temminckii* which arrived exhausted on board the Scottish Fishery Department's vessel 'Scotia' in the Western Approaches, off southwest Ireland on 12th June and subsequently died. After the occurrence of a **Black Stork** *Ciconia nigra* in Essex during May, another was reported from Aberuthven (Perthshire) on 3rd August.

Waterfowl

Whether escapes or wild birds, an influx of **Ruddy Shelducks** *Tadorna ferruginea* took place in late July. Singles were found in Humberside, at Hanningfield Reservoir (Essex) and at Livermore Lake (Suffolk), with two at East Tilbury (Essex). A duck **Red-crested Pochard** *Netta rufina* found at Abberton Reservoir on 2nd was joined by a drake in late July. A **Surf Scoter** *Melanitta perspicillata* reported from Aberdeen on 4th August had probably summered on this side of the Atlantic, but of even more potential interest is the report of a duck which may have been a **Redhead** *Aythya americana* in the Hebrides.



Raptors

After the reports of **Black Kites** *Milvus migrans* in May, three records were received on 12th: individuals at Pagham, in the New Forest (Hampshire) and near Worthing (West Sussex). An early migrant **Honey Buzzard** *Pernis apivorus* was seen at Marwick Head (Orkney) on 28th.

Gulls, terns and skuas

The Titchwell (Norfolk) **Gull-billed Tern** *Gelochelidon nilotica* remained until 27th, when another was reported at Barn Elms Reservoir (Surrey). A seasonal **Caspian Tern** *Sterna caspia* was seen at Sandwich Bay on 24th, a locality which reported five **Mediterranean Gulls** *Larus melanocephalus* during the month. The easterly weather this month did bring an influx of **Black Terns** *Chlidonias niger*: 186 were seen at Chew Valley Lake (Avon) on 25th, with 67 on the following day; 50 were

Shearwaters

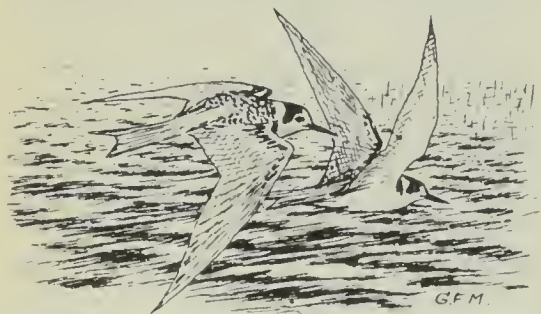
The discovery of flocks of large shearwaters off southwest Cornwall has attracted many watchers. At Porthgwarra, 39 **Great Shearwaters** *Puffinus gravis* and 153 **Cory's Shearwaters** *Calonectris diomedea*, the latter obviously non-breeders, were seen on 27th. Subsequently, daily watches reported no more Greats and lesser numbers of Cory's until the 6th August, when 174 were seen. Presumably, the feeding conditions must have been good.

Passerines

The easterlies did not produce any early falls of Continental birds, but a few vagrants did appear. That Fair Isle speciality, the **Yellow-breasted Bunting** *Emberiza aureola*, appeared early on the island, on 4th, and an **Icterine Warbler** *Hippolais icterina* arrived there on 31st. A **Melodious Warbler** *H. polyglotta* at Portland on 3rd August and a **Woodchat Shrike** *Lanius senator* at St Ives (Cornwall) on 6th August were expected autumn vagrants, but a **Lesser Grey Shrike** *L. minor* at Glastonbury (Somerset) from 20th to 27th did not fit the normal occurrence pattern or weather conditions, so perhaps arrived in this country much earlier.

Latest news

During the mid-September weekend: 150 **Leach's Petrels** *Oceanodroma leucorhoa* off the Wirral (Cheshire) and a few at St Ives and on Tees-side; **Great Shearwaters** also off St Ives and the Wirral; two **Sabine's Gulls** *Larus sabini* at their regular St Ives haunt and also at least one off the Wirral; **Wilson's Phalaropes** *Phalaropus tricolor* at Chew Valley Lake and on Tees-side; **Pectoral Sandpipers** at Marazion (Cornwall) (two) and Cley; **White-rumped Sandpiper** trapped at night at Dungeness, where also a **Woodchat Shrike**; **Yellow-breasted Bunting** at Berrow (Somerset).



present at Lower Paxton (Cambridgeshire) on 27th; and most English midland reservoirs were visited by small flocks. Only one **White-winged Black Tern** *C. leucopterus* was reported, from Hanningfield Reservoir on 3rd August. A **Bonaparte's Gull** *Larus philadelphia* was a good find at Farlington (Hampshire) on 26th, and a **Great Skua** *Stercorarius skua* was a surprise visitor to Livermore Lake on 14th. The return movement of **Long-tailed Skuas** *S. longicaudus* started early, with one reported from Teesmouth on 27th and two at Prawle Point (Devon) on 6th August.

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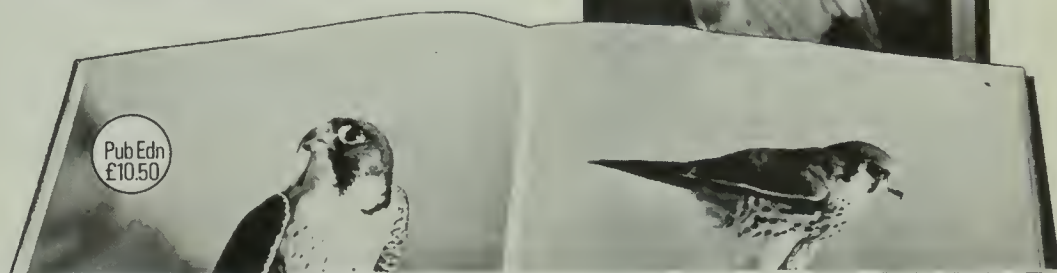
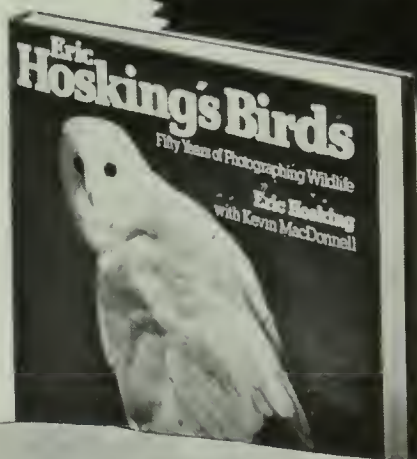
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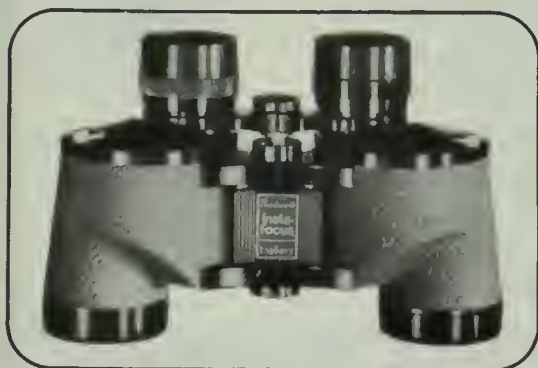
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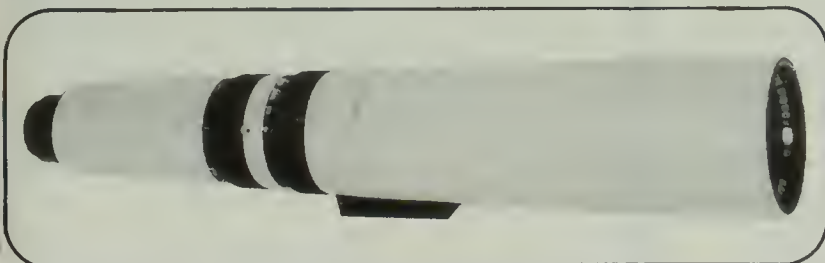
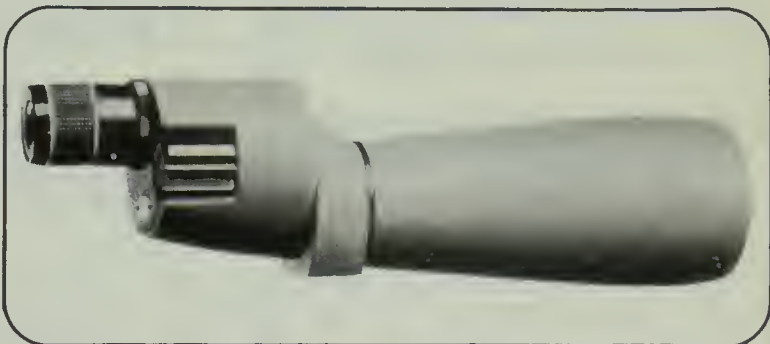
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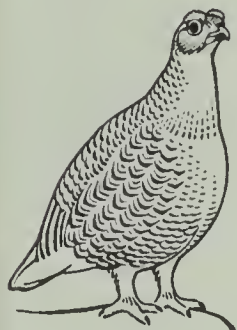
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Report on rare birds in Great Britain in 1979

Michael J. Rogers and the Rarities Committee

This is the twenty-second report of the Rarities Committee. Details of committee membership and other matters relating to its work during the year have already been published (*Brit. Birds* 73: 427). So far, 735 records have been accepted for 1979, 85% of the total submitted.

J. N. Dymond has again compiled the species comments, and we are most grateful for his expert handling of this task. Irish records are adjudicated by the Irish Records Panel: we are grateful for permission to include details of the accepted records in the species comments, and thank J. Fitzharris, the Panel's honorary secretary, for providing them in advance of publication in the 'Irish Bird Report' in *Irish Birds*. D. J. Britton has again compiled the running totals of records which appear in brackets after each species name: these and other details of the report's presentation are explained on page 492.

We wish to record the special debt of gratitude owed to the late M. D. England. Since 1971 he had been avicultural advisor to the committee: his expert advice on the importation and potential escape status of several species will be sadly missed.

The completeness and accuracy of this report has been due to the valued co-operation of the county and regional recorders, the bird observatories, the BTO, the Nature Conservancy Council and the RSPB. Dr W. R. P.

Bourne, W. F. Curtis, Dr C. J. Feare, Derek Goodwin, P. J. Hayman, M. A. Ogilvie, R. F. Porter, I. S. Robertson, Kees Roselaar, Will Russell, Patrick Sellar and D. I. M. Wallace have given their advice on special topics, for which we are most grateful. We thank the photographers whose work enhances this report, and urge more to send their rarity photographs to MJR for possible inclusion in future reports.

All records should be sent to the honorary secretary, Michael J. Rogers, 195 Vicarage Road, Sunbury-on-Thames, Middlesex TW16 7TP, preferably via the appropriate county or regional recorder (see latest list *Brit. Birds* 72: 446-449). A copy of the list of species considered by the committee (67: 347-348) can be obtained from MJR, as can copies of the Rarities Committee Record Form: the latter should be used, or its format followed, when submitting reports. PJG

Systematic list of accepted records

The principles and procedure followed in considering records were explained in the 1958 report (*Brit. Birds* 53: 155-158). The systematic list is set out in the same way as in the 1978 report (72: 503-549). The following points show the basis on which the list has been compiled.

(i) The details included for each record are (1) county; (2) locality; (3) number of birds if more than one, and age and sex if known (in the case of spring and summer records, however, the age is normally given only where the bird concerned was not in adult plumage); (4) if trapped or found dead, and where specimen is stored, if known; (5) date(s); and (6) observer(s) up to three in number, in alphabetical order. In accordance with our declared policy (see *Brit. Birds* 68: 1-4), the new county names have been used, and observers are asked to bear this in mind when submitting records.

(ii) In general, this report is confined to records which are regarded as certain, and 'probables' are not included. In the case of the very similar Long-billed *Limnodromus scolopaceus* and Short-billed Dowitchers *L. griseus*, however, we are continuing to publish indeterminable records, and this also applies to observations of the two pratincoles *Glareola*

and of such difficult groups as albatrosses *Diomedea* and frigatebirds *Fregata*.

(iii) The sequence of species, vernacular names and scientific nomenclature follow *The 'British Birds' List of Birds of the Western Palearctic* (1978). Any sight records of subspecies (including those of birds trapped and released) are normally referred to as 'showing the characters' of the race concerned.

(iv) The three numbers in brackets after each species' name refer respectively to (1) the total to the end of 1957, (2) the total for the period since the formation of the Rarities Committee in 1958, but excluding (3) the total for the current year. A detailed breakdown of the figures for previous years is held by the honorary secretary.

(v) The world breeding range is given in brackets at the beginning of each species comment.

White-billed Diver *Gavia adamsii* (18, 44, 6)

Grampian Banff Bay, juvenile, 23rd February (J. J. C. Hardy).

Lothian Near South Queensferry, 18th February (A. Stewart).

Northumberland Boulmer, adult ♀, freshly dead, 4th March (G. F. Miller), skin retained by J. R. Mather.

Shetland Whalsay, adult, probably late March to 5th May (Dr B. Marshall, J. D. Okill, N. Polson). Fair Isle, adult, 5th May (N. R. Jones). Near Hascosay, adult, 21st October and 2nd November (R. J. Tulloch *et al.*); possibly another, 20th November (J. N. Dymond *et al.*).

1969 Kent Sittingbourne, juvenile, freshly dead, about November (per C. E. Wheeler).

1977 Shetland Vatsetter, adult, 5th May (R. J. Tulloch).

1978 Suffolk Off Felixstowe, 5th January (P. J. Marsh).

(Arctic Russia, Siberia and Alaska) These six, and another Shetland corpse record pending, constitute the best year ever.

Black-browed Albatross *Diomedea melanophris* (2, 20, 0)

Shetland Hermaness, Unst, adult, from late March (per R. J. Tulloch).

(Southern oceans) Seawatchers failed to see any albatrosses during the year.

Cory's Shearwater *Calonectris diomedea* (a few, 1696, 21)

Devon Prawle Point, two, 3rd June (R. M. Belringer, J. C. Nicholls).

Highland Loch Fleet, Sutherland, 30th August (D. J. Britton).

Humberside Flamborough Head, 13th April (P. A. Lassey). Grimston, eight, 17th August (A. W. Wallis, S. G. Wilson).

Kent Foreness, 29th July (D. C. Gilbert, S. D. W. Mount).

Man Calf of Man, 7th May (P. P. Jennings).

Norfolk Cley, 27th July (G. R. & Mrs H. J. Welch).

West Sussex Hove, 12th April (R. J. Fairbank).

1977 Tayside Usan, Angus, two, 24th August (W. J. Low).

1978 Humberside Flamborough Head, 16th July; 22nd July (D. I. M. Wallace); 29th July (D. Beaumont, P. A. Lassey, S. Rooke). Spurn, 28th August (N. A. Bell, B. Fendley, P. Higson); three, 17th September (A. Hateley, D. Kirton, G. Warrilow).

(East Atlantic and Mediterranean) Also singles off Slyne Head, Co. Galway, on 16th and 23rd May and off Loop Head, Co. Clare, on 28th June, and two off Mizen Head, Co. Cork, on 2nd September. A fairly typical showing.

Little Shearwater *Puffinus assimilis* (44, 51, 0)

1977 Cheshire Rostherne Mere, 29th June, died 3rd July (*Brit. Birds* 71: 489), now at Manchester Museum.

1977 Humberside Flamborough Head, 11th June; 26th June (D. I. M. Wallace).

1978 Humberside Flamborough Head, 21st July (D. I. M. Wallace); 31st August (A. Grieve, S. Rook *et al.*); two, 3rd September (P. A. Lassey, R. M. Stokes, D. I. M. Wallace); three, 1st October (P. A. Lassey, Miss I. Smith, D. I. M. Wallace).

(Atlantic south from Madeira and Caribbean, and southern oceans) The series of records off Flamborough Head during 1976-78 (1, 2 and 7) is without precedent. A small shearwater seen off Dursey Island, Co. Cork, on 26th September may have been of this species.

Wilson's Petrel *Oceanites oceanicus* (4, 4, 0)

1978 Cornwall St Ives, 11th September (R. Burridge, P. M. Ellis, V. R. Tucker).

(Southern oceans) Only the fourth this century, the others having occurred at St Ives in October 1967, Cape Clear Island, Co. Cork, in August 1969 and again at St Ives in October 1970.

Little Bittern *Ixobrychus minutus* (150, 120, 8)

Cornwall Stithians Reservoir, adult ♂, 19th to 29th May (D. Burley, G. Jackson).

Devon New Bridge, near Ashburton, ♀, 17th to 19th May (J. M. Paton *et al.*).

Fife Morton Lochs, adult ♂, 23rd May (P. K. Kinnear).

Hertfordshire Oughtonhead, adult ♂, 9th June (R. Webb).

Lothian Near Tynninghame, ♀, 20th to 27th May (J. H. Ballantyne, A. Cluness, R. F. & Mrs J. P. Durman).

Norfolk Cley, adult ♂, 20th May (D. J. Fisher, S. J. M. Gantlett, T. A. Walsh *et al.*).

West Glamorgan Oxwich, adult ♂, 25th May; probably same, 30th June (Dr D. K. Thomas).

1978 Central/Strathclyde Loch Lomond, ♂, 5th June (*Brit. Birds* 72: 509), locality now stated as mouth of Luss Water, Dunbarton, Strathclyde.

(West Eurasia, Africa and Australasia) Also a male on Cape Clear Island, Co. Cork, on 15th and 16th May. A typical scatter of records, all first seen in a period of just over three weeks.

Night Heron *Nycticorax nycticorax* (165, 92, 9)

Durham Brasside Pond, adult, 2nd July (J. Lucas, B. Stewart).

Dyfed Skomer, adult, 12th to 16th May (M. Alexander, D. Paynter).

Gloucestershire Near Sandhurst, adult, 11th to 12th June (J. Rowe).

Humberside Spurn, not aged, 19th September (N. P. Senior). Flamborough Head, immature, 23rd to 24th September (J. E., J. M., M. S. & S. M. Dale *et al.*).

Lincolnshire Skegness, immature, 30th December to 1st January 1980, found dead (shot) 4th, ringed as nestling near Belyayevka Black Sea region, USSR, 8th June 1979, now at King's Lynn Natural History Museum.

Norfolk Winterton, adult, 13th May (P. R. Allard).

Scilly St Agnes, adult, late May (F. H. D. Hicks per D. B. Hunt).

Suffolk Iken Decoy, adult, 1st to 12th June (H. Dumas, A. & P. Hammond).

(South Eurasia, Africa and the Americas) The exciting midwinter recovery of a Russian-ringed nestling in Lincolnshire establishes beyond all doubt that the old theory that records of this species originated from the free-flying colony in Edinburgh Zoo was mistaken. The first breeding record for Belgium was in 1979 (*Brit. Birds* 73: 257).

Squacco Heron *Ardeola ralloides* (95, 12, 3)

Hertfordshire Rye Meads, 1st July (A. & M. Harris, T. Sams) (see fig. 1, below).

Kent Cliffe, 4th to 9th July (T. E. Bowley *et al.*).

Northumberland Seaton Burn, 24th June (D. Logan, Viscount Ridley, Brigadier G. T. E. Westbrook).



Fig. 1. Squacco Heron *Ardeola ralloides*, Hertfordshire, July 1979 (from field sketches Alan Harris)

(South Europe, southwest Asia and Africa) Six of the 12 previous records since 1958 were in June and July.

Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis* (92, 18, 2)

Durham Witton-le-Wear, 15th to 17th April (S. L. Thexton *et al.*).

Tayside Loch of Kinnordy, Angus, 10th to 19th May (J. Miles).

1971 Berkshire South Stoke, juvenile, at least 10th July to 9th August (S. J. M. Gantlett, J. A. Lucas, Mrs H. Simpson *et al.*); subsequently found dead but corpse destroyed (per R. E. Youngman).

(Almost cosmopolitan in tropics, nearest breeding colonies in south Spain and Portugal) The 1971 record was widely considered at the time to be an escape from captivity, but there was no evidence of this, and a juvenile is more likely to have been a wild individual.

Little Egret *Egretta garzetta* (23, 127, 15)**Cleveland** Dorman's Pool, 3rd to 4th July (M. A. Blick, F. A. Clements, P. Hogarth *et al.*).**Devon** Kingsbridge Estuary and Slapton Ley area, 23rd September to at least 10th February 1980 (M. R. Edmonds, Miss D. J. Ide, G. Waterhouse *et al.*).**Dorset** Wool, 31st May (L. E. Kerridge).**Dyfed** Sandy Haven, Carmarthen, 7th June (T. Gover, A. Hansen).**Gloucestershire** Slimbridge, 11th June (L. P. Alder).**Gwynedd** Tywyn, Caernarvon, 12th June (P. Elliott *et al.*). Malltreath area, Anglesey, about 5th to 29th July (B. Boothroyd, K. G. Croft, J. P. Wilkinson *et al.*).**Hampshire** Farlington Marshes, 30th May (A. Fisher, P. M. & W. A. Potts); probably same, Titchfield Haven, 31st May (R. W. Andrews, B. S. Duffin, D. Powell); probably same, Pennington Marsh, 2nd to at least 7th June (M. J. Rogers, L. H. J. Masters *et al.*); see also West Sussex.**Hertfordshire** Near Welwyn Garden City, at least 8th June (C. Ball, T. D. Trevis).**Kent** Cliffe, 9th June (C. G. Golson, J. E. Tilbrook).**Lincolnshire** Moulton Marsh, Fosdyke, long dead (shot), 15th September (E. J. Redshaw), skin retained by A. H. Smith; ringed as juvenile, Zuid Flevoland, Netherlands, 9th July 1979, from first Dutch breeding record (*Brit. Birds* 72: 590).**Norfolk** Cley, 30th May (G. J. A. Burton, W. H. Truckle).**Somerset** Porlock Marsh, 14th May (N. V. Allen, A. E. Coles).**Suffolk** Blyth Estuary, 7th June (D. & J. McMillan).**West Sussex** Chichester Harbour, 27th to 28th May (Mrs J. H. M. Edom, Mr & Mrs J. Hargreaves); probably same as Hampshire individual.**1978 Devon** Exe Estuary, 5th May (R. F. Moore), previously rejected (*Brit. Birds* 72: 545), now accepted on further evidence.**1978 Northumberland** Holywell Pond, 6th May (A. Blackett, S. J. Hingston, K. Walton).

(South Eurasia, Africa and Australia) Also one at Fota Island, Co. Cork, on 9th June. An above-average influx of this southern egret, but not in contention with the 47 in 1970.

Great White Egret *Egretta alba* (10, 8, 2)**Humberside** Messingham, 7th to 8th August (G. P. Catley *et al.*).**Norfolk** Hickling, 10th to 18th August (R. Butler, D. J. Holman *et al.*).**North Yorkshire** Near Whitby, 15th July (Mrs A. R. Elliot).**1978 Orkney** North Ronaldsay, 28th to 29th April (J. W. A. Cutt, A. & J. Swanney, Dr K. F. & Mrs H. P. Woodbridge *et al.*).

(Almost cosmopolitan, extremely local in Europe) The Humberside and Norfolk records are considered to relate to one individual, but the recent flush of records continues.

Purple Heron *Ardea purpurea* (90, 252, 15)**Cambridgeshire** Ouse Washes, 15th April (T. Talbot).**Cheshire** Frodsham, 24th May and 12th to 24th June (R. G. Bertera, D. Goff, B. E. Murray).**Devon** Slapton, sub-adult, 7th to 12th May (R. M. Belringer *et al.*).**Dyfed** Ramsey Island, Pembrokeshire, 14th to 16th May (G. Bevan, R. Pratt); same, Dowrog Common, 21st May to 15th July (J. W. Donovan, C. E. Lambourne, H. H. Williams). Teify River, near Cardigan, immature, 2nd June (Prof. W. E. Waters *et al.*).**East Sussex** Winchelsea, 9th June (N. R. Davies).**Kent** Westbere and Stodmarsh, 19th to 22nd May (R. E. C. Collins, W. G. Harvey, M. J. Palmer *et al.*).**Merseyside** Crossens Marsh, 9th May (Dr B. McCarthy).**Norfolk** Hickling, 4th to at least 5th May (G. E. Dunmore, D. J. Holman *et al.*).**Oxfordshire** Oxford, 14th May (A. C. Manley). Bicester, 5th July (A. Peters).**Scilly** St Mary's, juvenile, 2nd October (R. J. B. Jackson, M. J. Rogers *et al.*).**Somerset** Westhay Moor, 16th April (J. A. McGeogh, M. G. Wilson).

Suffolk Minsmere, immature, 16th to 24th May (J. B. Kemp, G. R. Welch *et al.*); adult, 16th to 28th May (G. R. Welch *et al.*); adult, 11th June (G. R. Welch); probably same, Walberswick, 11th June (M. Smith).

1977 Kent Dungeness, 11th April (A. T. M. Ruck).

1978 Suffolk Minsmere, adult, 13th May (*Brit. Birds* 72: 510), again, 21st (R. A. Hume *et al.*).

(South-central Eurasia, north to Netherlands, and Africa) A relatively lean year for this, the most frequent of the rarer herons. Only one in autumn is unusual.

Black Stork *Ciconia nigra* (26, 17, 2)

Norfolk Breydon Water, 31st July (P. R. Allard).

Scilly St Agnes, 25th May (D. J. & Mrs D. C. Barker).

1977 Highland Dulsie Bridge, Nairn, 17th July (N. J. O. Graham); same, Tomatin, Inverness, 18th to 22nd (R. H. Dennis, Miss L. Holt *et al.*).

(Iberia, and Eurasia from France to China, also southern Africa) The sixth consecutive year of occurrence, and typical dates.

White Stork *Ciconia ciconia* (70, 179, 15)

Dorset Swanage, 4th May (Miss H. Cox); probably same, near Dorchester, 5th (Dr J. Clarke).

Grampian Maryculter, Kincardine, 25th April; same, Banchory, 26th (Miss M. Stevenson per Dr A. G. Knox). See Highland below. Fochabers, Moray, 20th to 22nd June (Mr & Mrs E. L. Thomas).

Greater Manchester Standish, 8th June (W. D. Forshaw, P. Rowland).

Gwynedd Near Llyn Arenig Fawr, Merioneth, 27th April (M. I. Eldridge).

Highland Geddes, Nairn, 22nd to 23rd April (R. H. Dennis, H. Graham, Mr MacIntosh-Walker), possibly same as Maryculter/Banchory individual in Grampian. Melvich, Sutherland, 22nd to 29th September (E. W. E. Maughan).

Lancashire Thornton-Cleveleys, 4th May (B. Dyson).

Lothian Barns Ness, 3rd June (G. F. Bell, S. Ward, P. Wilson).

Norfolk Wells, 7th April, flying west (S. Betts, N. Mears), later over Thornham and Titchwell (P. W. Wilkinson) and Hunstanton (C. C. & Mrs P. J. Bruton, S. M. Percival *et al.*); presumed same, Shouldham, 9th to 10th (Mrs Dorrington, Mrs Stevens, A. E. Vine *et al.*). Overy Staithe, two, 21st September, flying south (C. Wilson).

Strathclyde Biggar, Lanark, 17th April (R. W. Forrester). Galston, Ayr, 30th to 31st May (Mr & Mrs Hamilton, R. H. Hogg, D. A. Smith) (plates 242 & 243).

Surrey/West Sussex Povey Bridge, 9th to at least 26th July (Mrs P. Copper *et al.*). See West Sussex below.

Tayside Aberfeldy, Perthshire, one day in April (D. D. McDiarmid *et al.*). Perth, 10th to 13th May (D. Duncan, H. G. Millers).

West Sussex Near Lancing, 28th July (N. E. Wall), same as Surrey/West Sussex individual. Probably same, Chichester, 7th August (J. C. S. White *et al.*).

1977 Essex Rowhedge, 26th June (*Brit. Birds* 71: 491), seen here only by E. Steele, but same date at Great Bromley by P. Pearson.

1977 Highland Lybster, Caithness, 2nd May (per Mrs P. M. Collett); same, Achscrabster, 9th to 10th (Mrs P. M. Collett, J. M. Wilson); same, Lyth, 10th (G. C. Bates); same, West Clyth, 12th (Dr D. M. Edge).

1977 Orkney Westray, 29th to 30th April (J. Bain, Mrs M. A. Scott *et al.*); then probably same, North Ronaldsay, 30th April to 1st May (Mrs J. Swanney, Dr K. F. Woodbridge *et al.*), Harray, 13th May (D. Lea, L. Muir *et al.*) and Rousay, 14th June (R. Lowe).

1978 Clwyd Chirk, 4th March to 3rd April (*Brit. Birds* 72: 511), was ringed Jutland, Denmark, age/sex not known, June 1976 (per A. Baker).

1978 Devon Bowcombe Creek, 13th April (Mrs J. Paynter), probably same as Torquay individual, 14th (*Brit. Birds* 72: 511).

1978 Greater London Croydon area, 6th August (D. A. Hougham, J. McEachen); probably same as Kent individual (*Brit. Birds* 72: 511) and also that over Victoria, SW1, 20th June (per K. C. Osborne).

1978 Greater Manchester Saddleworth, 7th April (M. Charnock), possibly same as Clwyd individual above.

1978 Strathclyde Campbeltown, Kintyre, Argyll, 1st to 3rd May (per E. J. Maguire), thus additional to Strathclyde individual(s) already published (*Brit. Birds* 72: 511).

(Central and south Europe, southwest Asia and northwest Africa) An average year.



242 & 243. White Stork *Ciconia ciconia*, Strathclyde, May 1979 (Don Smith)



Glossy Ibis *Plegadis falcinellus* (many, 21, 2)

Kent Stodmarsh, 13th January to 29th June and 10th August to 1980. Sandwich Bay, 4th May, 17th November. Swale, occasionally, 19th April to 7th October. All relate to individual first seen 14th December 1975 (*Brit. Birds* 69: 330). Another, Stodmarsh, 28th October to 1980 (per D. W. Taylor).

Suffolk Benaere, 9th May (M. Parker).

1976 Humberside Hornsea Mere, 16th May (*Brit. Birds* 72: 512), second quoted observer was D. H. Beevers, not as stated.

(Cosmopolitan, nearest breeding colonies in Balkans) Two new records to continue the recent trend; after only eight records during 1958-71, there have been 15 since. The long-staying individual in east Kent at last has a chance for a chat.

Bewick's Swan *Cygnus columbianus* (0, 1, 1)

(North America) An individual showing the characters of the North American race *C. c. columbianus*, colloquially known as the Whistling Swan, occurred at Lough Gill, Co. Kerry, from 31st December 1978 to 1st February 1979, with a different one at Ballycotton, Co. Cork, on 24th February 1979.

Lesser White-fronted Goose *Anser erythropus* (47, 55, 3)

Gloucestershire Slimbridge, immature, 25th February to 4th March (A. M. Hanby, K. Lane, T. Norriss *et al.*); adult, 4th March (K. Lane *et al.*); adult, 21st December to at least 15th February 1980 (M. A. Ogilvie *et al.*).

1977 Essex Hanningfield Reservoir, adult, 22nd June to end of July (*Brit. Birds* 71: 492); this probable escape last noted 14th August (per J. Thorogood).

(Northeast Europe and Siberia) Three typical records. None has occurred in the other most favoured area, the Yare Valley, Norfolk, since 1971.

Brent Goose *Branta bernicla* (1, 3, 0)

Individuals showing the characters of the North American and east Siberian race *B. b. nigricans*, colloquially known as the Black Brant, were recorded as follows:

1974 Kent South Medway, February (the late Dr J. G. Harrison).

1976 Essex Horsey Island, 26th March (A. St Joseph), possibly same as Suffolk individual (*Brit. Birds* 72: 512).

(North America and east Siberia)

American Wigeon *Anas americana* (22, 82, 3)

Avon Chew Valley Lake, adult ♂, since 10th December 1978 (*Brit. Birds* 72: 513), last seen 20th January.

Cheshire Rostherne Mere, adult ♂, 27th February to 2nd March (J. P. Dawson, R. Halsey, T. H. Wall *et al.*).

Gwynedd Llyn Bodgylched, Anglesey, adult ♂, 21st January to 25th February (A. Baker, M. J. Donahue *et al.*).

Norfolk Breydon, adult ♂, 19th February (P. R. Allard).

(North America) Three typical records.

Teal *Anas crecca* (13, 113, 11)

Drakes showing the characters of the North American race *A. c. carolinensis*, colloquially known as the Green-winged Teal, were recorded as follows:

Cornwall Hayle, individual first seen 28th October 1978 (*Brit. Birds* 72: 513) remained until 26th February; presumed same, 26th October to at least January 1980 (S. M. Christophers *et al.*); (see also *Brit. Birds* 71: 493, probably fourth consecutive winter for this individual at this locality). Marazion Marsh, 15th to 27th April (S. C. Hutchings, P. A. Maker). Stithians Reservoir, 23rd to 26th December (D. J. Barker, S. C. Hutchings).

Fife Eden Estuary, 12th November 1978 (*Brit. Birds* 72: 513), to 21st January.

Gloucestershire Dowdeswell Reservoir, 13th January (A. R. Ball, Mrs S. C. Holland, D. V. Mardle).

Hampshire Farlington Marshes, 30th December-1978 to at least 17th January, see below.

Highland Newtonmore and area, Inverness, 19th to 27th May (D. J. Bates *et al.*).

Leicestershire Rutland Water, 18th to 28th April (T. Appleton, R. Baker, G. Elliot); considered same, Eye Brook Reservoir, 3rd to 13th May (B. Nightingale *et al.*).

Scilly St Mary's, 11th December to at least 16th January 1980 (D. B. Hunt, E. Griffiths, J. Spry).

Shetland Hillswiek, 25th May (I. Sandison).

Somerset Cheddar Reservoir, 17th January (B. Rabbitts). Durleigh Reservoir, 18th February (D. E. Paull).

1977 Cornwall See above.

1978 Cornwall See above.

1978 Hampshire Farlington Marshes, 30th December to at least 17th January 1979 (D. F. Billett, P. M. & W. A. Potts).

(North America) The drake first seen at Bull Island, Co. Dublin, on 20th November 1978 (*Brit. Birds* 72: 503-549) stayed until 26th April 1979. Other males were recorded at Ballymacoda, Co. Cork, on 4th February 1978, Carrigadrohid, Co. Cork, on 11th November 1979 and at Bull Island, Co. Dublin, from 25th November 1979 into 1980. The average during 1970-79 is just under eight per year.

Black Duck *Anas rubripes* (1, 7, 3)

Gwynedd Aber, Caernarvon, adult ♂, 11th February to 24th May (A. Baker, T. Gravett, N. A. Preston *et al.*); presumed same, 4th November to at least 16th March 1980 (B. Boothroyd, per Dr P. J. Dare).

Scilly Tresco, ♀, first seen 27th October 1976 (*Brit. Birds* 70: 416; 71: 493; 72: 514) present all year and again mated with Mallard *Anas platyrhynchos*, rearing three young with unknown success; 1978 hybrid also present (D. B. Hunt).

Strathclyde Stanley Dam, Paisley, Renfrew, adult ♂, 22nd to 28th December (D. L. Clugston *et al.*).

(North America) Also a male at Bull Island, Co. Dublin, on 1st December and later at Rogerstown, Co. Dublin, from 29th December into 1980. Three in one year, in addition to the long-staying Scilly individual, is a record for this species.

Blue-winged Teal *Anas discors* (19, 54, 7)

Cornwall Hayle, ♂, 6th August (L. P. Williams). Stithians Reservoir, ♂, 15th September and 4th October (K. E. Vinicombe). College Reservoir, Penryn, immature ♂, 24th September to 2nd October (B. Cave, S. M. Christophers, Dr G. W. Davis *et al.*).

Dorset Abbotsbury, immature ♀, trapped, 25th October (A. Dalley, J. Fair).

Gloucestershire Ashleworth Ham, immature ♂, 24th April to 1st May; same, Slimbridge, 2nd May (M. Smart, C. E. Williams *et al.*).

Northamptonshire Ditchford Gravel-pits, ♂, 13th April (S. G. D. Cook, S. Roddes *et al.*).

Nottinghamshire Near Clumber Park, ♂, 28th January, behaviour suggested ill, injured or escaped (B. Wilde).

Orkney Woodwick Bay, ♂, 2nd to 4th May (N. Picozzi, P. Reynolds *et al.*).

1978 Cambridgeshire Fenstanton, ♂, 11th to 12th February; also in Norfolk (*Brit. Birds* 72: 514); also at Over, Cambridgeshire, 18th to 22nd February (C. A. E. Kirtland *et al.*).

1978 Hampshire Farlington Marshes, ♂, 28th May (D. F. Billett).

1978 Hertfordshire Wilstone Reservoir, ♂, 5th April (A. J. Prater).

1978 Norfolk See Cambridgeshire above.

(North America) Markedly fewer than in the previous two years, but still above the average.

Ring-necked Duck *Aythya collaris* (1, 62, 25)

Bedfordshire Wyboston, ♂, 19th to 21st February (Dr J. T. R. & Mrs E. M. Sharrock *et al.*). Blunham, ♂, trapped, 27th March (Dr J. T. R. & Mrs E. M. Sharrock, A. Zwetsloot).

Cambridgeshire Little Paxton, ♂, 19th May (R. A. Hume), probably same as 1978 individual (*Brit. Birds* 72: 514) and current Ditchford, Northamptonshire, individual below.

Cornwall Marazion Marsh, ♀, between 20th January and 25th February; same, Drift Reservoir, 27th January to 2nd February (W. R. Hirst, L. P. Williams *et al.*), Crowdy Reservoir, ♂, 27th April (P. Kitchener). Stithians Reservoir, three ♂♂ and three ♀♀, 15th October (D. J. Barker, S. M. Christophers, B. K. Mellow *et al.*).

Cornwall/Devon Tamar Estuary, ♂, 19th January to 25th February (E. Griffiths, J. M. Randall); probably same, Upper Tamar Reservoir, 8th December to 1980 (S. M. Christophers, F. H. C. & I. Kendall *et al.*).

Devon River Dart, Tonnes, three ♀♀, 16th November to 1980 (S. Brayshaw, R. Heywood *et al.*), possibly same as Stithians Reservoir, Cornwall, ♀♀. Wistlandpound Reservoir, ♂, 11th to 14th December (T. J. Davis, Dr & Mrs A. Stormont, A. J. Vickery).

Essex Abberton Reservoir, ♀, 26th April (G. B. Brown, R. V. A. Marshall). Heybridge Gravel-pits, ♂, between 27th April and 5th May; probably same, Hanningfield Reservoir, 2nd May (G. R. Ekins, J. Miller *et al.*).

Gloucestershire Lechlade, ♂, 20th February (G. L. & M. G. Webber), considered additional to Cotswold Water Park individual below.

Gloucestershire/Wiltshire Cotswold Water Park, ♂, 21st January to at least 18th March (J. D. Sanders, J. G. Snowball, G. L. & M. G. Webber *et al.*), considered same as 1978 individual (*Brit. Birds* 72: 514); believed hybrid with Tufted Duck *Aythya fuligula*, first seen April 1978 (*Brit. Birds* 72: 514) again at least 3rd February (per J. D. Sanders).

Highland Bettyhill, Sutherland, ♂, 14th April to May (G. Bates, R. A. Broad, D. Whitaker). Locality withheld, ♂, 27th May and 6th June (observers' names withheld).

Humberside Tophill Low Reservoir, ♂, 27th January (M. Coverdale, K. Rotherham), probably same as individual last seen 29th November 1978 (*Brit. Birds* 71: 515); also probably same, 17th November (J. H. Lawson, M. McGarvin, S. P. Rollison). Messingham, ♂, 3rd to 23rd June; presumed same, 6th to 20th October (J. T. Harriman, D. Suddaby *et al.*); presumed same, Barrow Haven, 24th October to 3rd November (G. P. Catley, D. A. Robinson), all likely to relate to north Humberside individual.

Northamptonshire Ditchford Gravel-pits, ♂, 15th to 18th April (N. M. Butler, S. G. D. Cook, P. W. Richardson *et al.*), probably same as Cambridgeshire individual. Hollowell and Ravensthorpe Reservoirs, ♂, 3rd May (P. W. Richardson *et al.*).

Northumberland Newton Pond, ♂, 31st May to 2nd June (A. J. Holcombe *et al.*).

Oxfordshire Bleunheim Park, ♂, at least 7th February (M. Crewe *et al.*).

Scilly Tresco, ♀ or immature, 17th October to 1st November (K. C. Osborne, H. P. K. Robinson, B. J. Short *et al.*).

Shetland Seatness, immature ♂, 8th December to 7th January 1980 (J. N. Dymond *et al.*).

Somerset Cheddar Reservoir, ♀, 27th to 29th January (J. Palfery, B. Rabbitts); probably same, 8th to 9th May (B. Rabbitts).

Strathclyde Gailes, Ayr, ♂, since late 1978 (*Brit. Birds* 72: 515) to at least 20th January.

Wiltshire See Gloucestershire/Wiltshire.

1977 Highland Durness, Sutherland, ♂, 28th June (R. H. Dennis, B. Hendy, M. Stott).

1978 Humberside Tophill Low Reservoir, ♂, to at least 29th November (*Brit. Birds* 72: 515), probably same, 27th January 1979 *et seq.* as above.

1978 Northumberland Newton-by-the-Sea, ♂, 28th May (D. A. Henshilwood, I. Nicholson, D. L. Woodfall).

1978 Staffordshire See Warwickshire.

1978 Suffolk ♂, 19th April (*Brit. Birds* 72: 515), locality was Barham, not as stated.

1978 Warwickshire Draycote Water, ♂, 24th December 1977 to at least 29th January (*Brit. Birds* 72: 515), remained to 22nd February before moving to Brandon as stated (per G. R. Harrison). Alvecote, ♂, 14th to 19th January (*Brit. Birds* 72: 515), was 14th and 19th January, not as stated, and precise locality was in Staffordshire (per G. R. Harrison).

(North America) Also a male at Lurgan Park Lake, Co. Armagh, from 23rd November to 2nd December, a female at Kilkerran Lake, Co. Cork, on 29th October, joined by a male on 2nd November and another female later, all three remaining into 1980. A continuation of the form of 1977 and 1978.

King Eider *Somateria spectabilis* (62, 92, 5)

Cumbria South Walney, ♂, 10th to 23rd June (M. H. Thom *et al.*).

Dumfries & Galloway Loch Ryan, ♂, 4th February (A. Baker *et al.*) and 10th (D. J. Holman), presumed same as previous two winters (*Brit. Birds* 71: 494; 72: 516); returned late 1979 to at least 20th January 1980 (R. H. Hogg).

Grampian Covesea Skerries Light to west of Lossiemouth, ♂, 17th to 24th March (S. G. D. Cook, J. Eames *et al.*).

Highland Golspie and Loch Fleet, Sutherland, immature ♂, 11th to at least 31st December 1978 (*Brit. Birds* 72: 516), again, 6th January (G. R. Ekins, C. Harris, A. R. Mainwood) and 11th February (A. R. Mainwood); adult ♂, 18th February, 12th October and 1st December, considered present all year and same as individual first seen 1975 (*Brit. Birds* 69: 331; 71: 495; 72: 516) (A. R. Mainwood); still present 4th January 1980 (J. M. Clark).

Strathclyde Gales, Ayrshire, immature ♂, 19th to 20th February (B. C. & R. W. Forrester, D. Given *et al.*). Tayinloan, Argyll, ♂, 3rd June (E. J. Maguire, R. Morton).

Western Isles Luskentyre Banks, Harris, ♂, 19th November (Dr N. E. Buxton, W. A. J. Cunningham).

1976 Shetland Burwick, ♂, 22nd January; probably same, Cliffsound, 16th April (R. Johnson). Linga Sound, Yell, sub-adult ♂, 24th to 25th October (P. K. Kinnear, M. Richardson, R. J. Tulloch). Toft, adult ♂, 13th November; same Sullom Voe, 17th November to 23rd March 1977 (R. J. Tulloch *et al.*).

1977 Shetland Sullom Voe, ♂, 13th January to 23rd March (*Brit. Birds* 71: 495), first seen, Toft, 13th November 1976.

1978 Dumfries & Galloway Loch Ryan, ♂, 27th November to at least 4th January (*Brit. Birds* 72: 516), again 4th March (C. G. Stack *et al.*) and presumed same, 2nd December and in 1979 (A. Baker *et al.*).

1978 Orkney North Ronaldsay, ♂, 19th October (A. D. K. Ramsay).

(Circumpolar Arctic) Also a male at Rosbeg, Co. Donegal, from 12th to 28th April, considered to be the individual which was first seen there in 1974. The Cumbrian bird was only the fourth English record since 1915, and one of those, in Essex in 1976, may not have been a genuine vagrant. Most surprisingly, two consecutive winters have now passed since the last record in Shetland, formerly much the best bet for this species.

Steller's Eider *Polysticta stelleri* (5, 8, 1)

Orkney Papa Westray, ♂, 2nd to 19th June (J. Chester).

Western Isles Off Verran Island, South Uist, ♂, 27th to 28th February (S. G. D. Cook), possibly same as individual first seen in summer 1972 (*Brit. Birds* 66: 338).

(Arctic Russia to extreme northwest Canada) No details were received concerning the long-staying male in the Western Isles: any observers who make the trip to search for this bird are urged to send in details to the committee.

Surf Scoter *Melanitta perspicillata* (75, 75, 5)

Dumfries & Galloway Southerness, immature ♂, 14th December to at least 27th January 1980 (A. J. Hunt, A. J. Prater *et al.*).

Dyfed Near Druidston Haven, Pembrokeshire, ♂, 29th October to 4th November (J. W. Donovan, L. Hawkins, D. Saunders).

Grampian Burghead, Moray, immature ♂, 4th February (P. J. Sellar).

Highland Loch Insh, Badenoch & Strathspey, ♂, 14th October (R. Leavett, J. Lyall). Golspie, Sutherland, ♂, 17th to 19th November (Mrs M. Hall, Mrs H. T. Mainwood).

1977 Highland Rhum, Inverness, two ♂♂, 23rd October (Fiona Guinness).

1977 Northumberland Holy Island, ♂, 18th September (Mr & Mrs M. Wood).

(North America) Also a reappearance in Ireland: a male at Bundovan, Co. Down, from the beginning of the year to 28th April and again from early October into 1980. Mostly typical records, but that at Loch Insh was 80 km from the nearest open sea at Fort William, although it seems far more likely that it flew up the Spey Valley from the Moray Firth: in any case, it was the first inland record anywhere since at least 1958.

Black Kite *Milvus migrans* (5, 27, 7)**Essex** South Ockenden, 19th to 20th April (A. R. Adamcik, G. R. Ekins, S. A. Webb).**Grampian** Loch of Strathbeg, 30th May (J. Dunbar).**Humberside** East Halton, 18th May (G. P. Catley).**Humberside/North Yorkshire** Bubwith area, 19th May (H. O. Bunce, Miss J. Fairhurst).**Norfolk** Cromer area, 28th May (C. Freeman, H. Shorrocks, D. G. Wright *et al.*).**North Yorkshire** See Humberside/North Yorkshire.**South Glamorgan** Cardiff, 19th May (D. C. Palmer).**Suffolk** Walberswick, 12th May (T. Wheeler). Southwold, 20th to 22nd May (A. J. Croucher, G. J. Jobson, M. Parker *et al.*) (plates 244 & 245).**244 & 245.** Black Kite *Milvus migrans* being mobbed by crow *Corvus*, Suffolk, May 1979 (A. J. Croucher)**West Glamorgan** Near Overton, Gower, 17th to 18th April (D. O. Elias, H. E. Grenfell *et al.*).**1974 Grampian** Cabrach, Banff, 14th July (D. Russell), previously rejected (*Brit. Birds* 71: 532; 72: 434, plate 204), now accepted after reconsideration (see pages 481-482).**1978 Norfolk** Cley, 15th October (S. Harries, R. N. Hopper, A. W. Wolton *et al.*).

(Most of Eurasia, Africa and Australia) With only five pre-1958 records, just three in the ten years 1958-67 and then 24 in the next ten years, seven in 1979 clearly maintains the upward surge. The species has attempted to breed in Belgium in each of the last four years (*Brit. Birds* 72: 276; 73: 257).

Red-footed Falcon *Falco vespertinus* (100, 203, 15)**Derbyshire** Beeley Moor, ♀, 1st July (P. Shooter) and 24th (R. A. Frost, J. M. Turton).**Highland** Near Westerdale, Caithness, immature ♀, 8th June (P. R. Holness).**Humberside** Flamborough Head, ♂, 27th May (P. A. Lassey, Miss I. Smith). Mappleton, ♀, 22nd August (W. F. Curtis).**Kent** Stodmarsh, ♂, 28th June (C. Broomthorpe, W. G. Harvey *et al.*).**Lincolnshire** Saltfleetby, ♂, 24th June (G. P. Catley, M. Mellor). Donna Nook, immature, 2nd November (S. Lorand).**Merseyside** Marshside, ♂, 10th May (S. J. Riley).**Norfolk** Winterton, ♂, 3rd April (R. Cobbold); ♀, 22nd April; another ♀, 19th May; immature, 30th September (P. R. Allard, A. D. Boote). Kelling, immature ♂, 18th to 22nd May (G. E. Dunmore, S. Roddis *et al.*).**West Sussex** Cissbury Ring, ♀, 24th to 31st May (C. E. Messer, O. Mitchell, R. J. Sandison *et al.*). Church Norton, ♂, 11th August (M. J. W. Hay).**1977 Orkney** Papa Westray, immature, 18th August (D. & Mrs E. A. Lea).**1978 Humberside** See Lincolnshire.**1978 Lincolnshire** North Killingholme, ♂, 9th May (*Brit. Birds* 72: 517), locality is in Humberside.**1978 Norfolk** Cley, immature ♂, 17th to 27th July (S. C. Joyner, A. R. Lowe *et al.*).**1978 Suffolk** Walberswick, first-summer ♂, 27th June to 3rd July (G. J. Jobson, A. V. Moon, C. S. Waller *et al.*).

(East Europe and south from Siberia) A typical scatter of this insectivorous falcon, but the first Norfolk individual is the second-earliest spring record; there is also a January record, for 1963.

Gyr Falcon *Falco rusticolus* (many, 53, 6)**Fife** Isle of May, 13th April (J. Grindell, Dr M. P. Harris).

Kent Folkestone, 28th April (J. N. Hollyer, P. R. Laslett).

Shetland Sullom, at least 20th January, then Lunna, 12th February (P. Reynolds, I. Sandison). Foula, 5th April (D. Pryterch per R. J. Tulloch). Fetlar, first-winter ♀, 18th May, found sick 19th, died in care 22nd (L. Brown, F. A. Clements, J. N. Dymond *et al.*), now at Royal Scottish Museum, Edinburgh.

Strathclyde Easter Ellister and Loch Talant, Islay, 22nd December 1978 to 2nd March (R. D. Bennion, P. & Mrs E. M. Wilson *et al.*), found dead, 19th March.

1978 Dumfries & Galloway Newton Stewart, 15th April (W. R. Brackenridge, B. C. & R. W. Forrester, R. H. Hogg *et al.*).

1978 Strathclyde Near Girvan, Ayr, 31st January (P. Handley). Maidens, Ayr, 22nd to 23rd and 25th October (G. D. Joy). Easter Ellister and Loch Talant, Islay, 22nd December to 1979, see above.

(Circumpolar Arctic) A late record for 1978 is of one at Lough Foyle, Co. Derry, on 17th December. Also one at Giant's Causeway, Co. Antrim, on 12th February. Six in 1979 is well above the average. The individual on Islay died of alphachlorate poisoning, while post-mortem analysis of the Fetlar individual revealed extremely high levels of toxic chemicals.

Little Crane *Porzana parva* (68, 26, 0)

1973 Essex Two-Tree Island, 28th to 31st March, two, 29th (P. Griggs, A. R. Mead, J. Miller), previously rejected (*Brit. Birds* 67: 344), now accepted after review.

(Central and east Europe and west Asia) These two take the total for 1973 to four, the most in any year since 1958.

Crane *Grus grus* (many, 737, 34)

Cambridgeshire Nene Washes, sub-adult, 24th to 25th March (D. Allen, J. Cadbury, Mrs H. J. Welch). Nene Lake, adult or sub-adult, 15th May (M. E. S. Rooney). Ouse Washes, adult, 25th to 26th May (D. Allen, P. Fordham, Mrs H. J. Welch).

Cumbria Flookborough area, adult, 30th September to at least 6th January 1980 (V. P. W. Lowe, B. B. Wilson *et al.*).

Devon Lannacombe, adult and immature, 15th to 16th January (C. Ansell, J. & Mrs L. E. Barlee).

East Sussex Selmeston, two adults, 14th April (D. A. Parmenter). Brede Levels, first-winter, 24th December to at least 10th April 1980 (L. J. Atter, M. P. Erends, D. J. Pankhurst *et al.*).

Gloucestershire Slimbridge, adult or sub-adult, 13th November (J. N. Wells).

Grampian Ythan Estuary, Forvie and Collieston area, first seen 26th April 1978 (*Brit. Birds* 72: 518; plate 216), to at least February.

Hampshire Titchfield Haven, two adults, 27th February (R. A. Chapman, B. S. Duffin, R. Gomes).

Highland Loch Eye, Ross & Cromarty, adult or sub-adult, 22nd December to at least 14th January 1980 (D. W. McAllister, C. & G. Thompson per C. G. Headlam).

Humberside Near Messingham, immature, first seen 1978 (*Brit. Birds* 72: 528) to 19th March. See Lincolnshire 1978, below. Lisset, adult, about 26th to 30th August (M. Coverdale, K. Rotherham).

Kent Sarre area, first-winter, 26th October to 20th December (R. E. C. Collins, D. C. Gilbert, W. G. Harvey). Sandwich Bay, not aged but possibly same, 27th October (P. W. J. Findley, M. P. Sutherland).

Lincolnshire Susworth and Scotter area, immature, first seen 1978, also in Humberside (*Brit. Birds* 72: 518), to 19th March (plate 246). Anderby, adult, 26th May (D. Wilson, H. Bunn), possibly same as crane sp., Gibraltar Point, 12th May (R. Lambert, D. Potts). Gibraltar Point, adult, 13th to 14th September (S. Davies, R. Lambert, G. W. Stone *et al.*). Kirton, near Boston, immature, 24th November (M. I. Eldridge).

Norfolk Holkham, adult and immature, 17th March (R. & Mrs A. Normand), probably same as two crane sp., Cley, 17th March (R. Garner) and Strumpshaw, 18th (M. Blackburn). Geldeston, first-year, 5th to 6th April (P. A. Dukes, M. Parker). Wortwell Marshes, adult,

20th to 21st April (Mrs S. Inwards, G. A. Webb). Welney, immature, 22nd to 26th May (Dr A.R. & Mrs I. W. Jennings *et al.*). Reedham, adult or sub-adult, 22nd to 23rd May (P. D. Round). Cley, not aged, 23rd May (R. H. Chittenden). Irstead, adult, found exhausted with rubber object around bill, 7th October and in care until release, Horsey area, early 1980 (M. Kittle per G. E. Dunmore), possibly same as Nottinghamshire/South Yorkshire individual, see below. Horsey area, Hickling and Waxham, two adults, 15th September to 5th April 1980, and third adult from 10th October to 5th April 1980 (plate 247), joined by Irstead individual on its release (P. R. Allard *et al.*).

Northumberland Wark, sub-adult, 1st to 12th April (N. K. Hall, J. & I. Wentzell *et al.*).

North Yorkshire Burniston, adult, about 20th to 26th April (P. J. Dunn, T. Hobson, F. J. Thompson).

Nottinghamshire/South Yorkshire Newington area, adult, at least 20th June to at least 1st July, last seen Lound, 13th September, with object around bill (C. H. Wear *et al.*), possibly same as Irstead, Norfolk, individual.

Oxfordshire Wootton, adult, 27th July (Dr B. Campbell).

South Yorkshire See Nottinghamshire.

Staffordshire Belvide Reservoir, adult, 5th May (P. & S. R. Gale).

Suffolk Shipmeadow, first-year, 5th or 6th April, same as Geldeston, Norfolk, individual (per D. R. Moore). Kessingland, sub-adult, 15th to 16th April (G. C. Johnson, G. W. Maybory). Reydon Marshes and Southwold, adult, 19th August to 13th September (B. K. & S. Abbott, G. J. Johnson, D. R. Moore *et al.*). Minsmere, two, probably including above individual, 14th September (T. O. James, I. Marshall, J. Sorensen).

Surrey Horley, two, not aged, 4th July (S. Rivers).

1972 Shetland Unst, adult, 6th to 24th May (J. Peterson per R. J. Tulloch).

1976 Highland Thurso/Loch Calder, Caithness, four, 24th to 30th October (*Brit. Birds* 70: 419) first seen 23rd.

1977 Essex Party of 26, East Bergholt, Tollesbury and Foulness. 16th October (*Brit. Birds* 71: 497); East Bergholt, where H. Wedgewood was observer, is in Suffolk; observers at Tollesbury were G. L. & M. B. Ackers, J. Cowlin and Miss M. Plumridge and, at Foulness, J. Osbourne and A. Shore. Observer J. Thorogood to be deleted.

1977 Suffolk See Essex.

1978 Dorset St Catherine's Hill, three immatures, 20th December (B. J. K. Casewell).

1978 Dyfed Newport, Pembrokeshire, immature, 5th to 6th December (A. P. R. & Mrs S. W. M. East). Moyle Grove, Pembrokeshire, adult, 13th to at least 16th December (Mrs M. Patterson *et al.*).

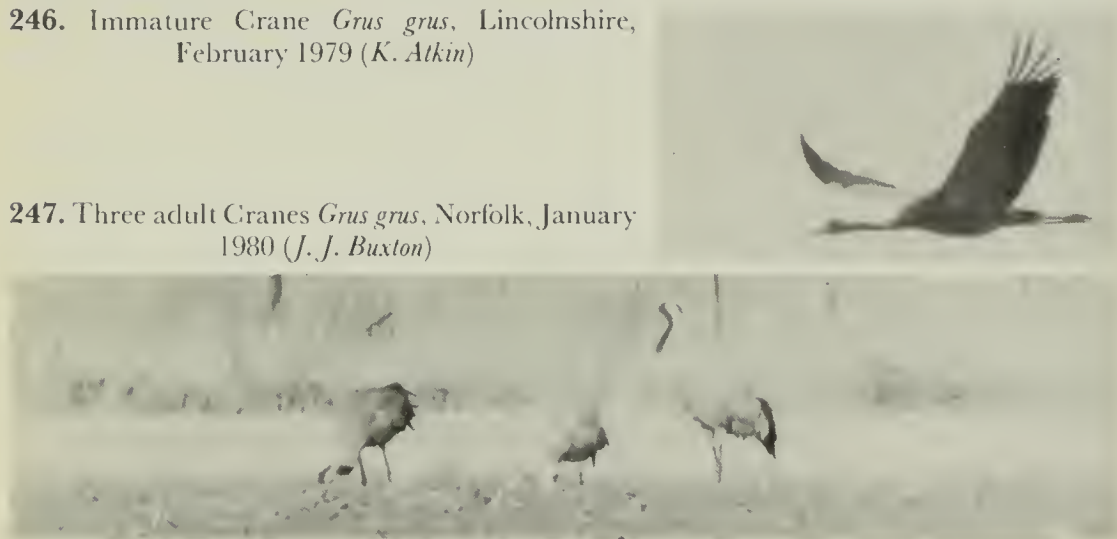
1978 Highland Tore, Ross & Cromarty, adult, 14th May (Mrs M. T. Dennis, Mrs Macrae); same, Kildermorie, 15th (Mr McMail per R. H. Dennis).

1978 Humberside See Lincolnshire.

1978 Lincolnshire Scotter and Sisworth area, occasionally, about November to February 1979; also near Messingham, Humberside (*Brit. Birds* 72: 518): second locality was Susworth, not as stated, individual was immature and dates now given as early December to 19th March 1979 (per K. Atkin).

246. Immature Crane *Grus grus*, Lincolnshire,
February 1979 (K. Atkin)

247. Three adult Cranes *Grus grus*, Norfolk, January
1980 (J. J. Buxton)



1978 Norfolk Holt, 6th March; Glandford and Bayfield area, 25th to 26th March (*Brit. Birds* 72: 518), also at Thornage, 20th March, and several surrounding localities in same period (per G. E. Dunmore).

1978 Northumberland Ross Links, adult, 14th March (J. M. & R. H. Poreh).

(North and central Eurasia, locally south to Turkey) Also two at Union Hall, Co. Cork, on 30th December 1978, seen again in Cork Harbour on 3rd January 1979. The additional 1978 records take the total for that year to 39, following the 31 in 1976 and 53 in 1977, and now 34 in 1979. During the years 1964-75, the average was about five. The Crane at Boardmills, Co. Down, was seen on 16th November 1977, not 16th December as published (*Brit. Birds* 72: 519).

Great Bustard *Otis tarda* (many, 7, 3)

Norfolk Horsey, adult ♂, 26th February (J. Buxton). Baeton, two, 2nd March (R. Cobbold *et al.*).

1978 Kent St Nicholas-at-Wade, third-year ♂, 7th January to 8th April (*Brit. Birds* 72: 519, plates 217 & 218): Kees Roselaar (*in litt.*) has pointed out that plate 217 depicts a first-winter ♂, as the inner four primaries are new and broad with distinct black tips, whereas the remainder are more attenuated, narrow and dull-coloured, typical of juvenile; also, observers should include R. E. C. Collins, the finder.

(Central and south Eurasia, discontinuously from Portugal to Pacific) These three were clearly associated with a huge invasion during winter 1978/79 into West Germany (at least 180), Netherlands (100), Denmark (3), Belgium (1) and Sweden (1) (*Brit. Birds* 72: 277, 591; 73: 258).

Black-winged Stilt *Himantopus himantopus* (98, 60, 3)

Cornwall Saltash and Landulph Marsh, about 14th to 27th August (E. Griffiths, R. W. E. Williams *et al.*).

Suffolk Blythburgh, two, 13th May (D. A. Dorling).

(Southern Eurasia, Africa, Australasia and the Americas) Two typical records of this most elegant wader which, however, remains an exceptional rarity.

Killdeer *Charadrius vociferus* (9, 16, 5)

Scilly Bryher and St Mary's, adult, 8th to 16th November (D. B. Hunt, R. O'Reilly, C. Robson *et al.*); further adult and two immatures, Bryher and St Mary's, 11th to 21st December, two individuals to at least 30th and one to at least 7th February 1980 (D. J. Barker, D. B. Hunt, B. K. Mellow *et al.*).

1978 Dyfed Pwll, Llanelli, 5th to 12th February (*Brit. Birds* 172: 520); last seen 12th March (D. H. Beevers, S. Hey, H. C. Laidlaw *et al.*).

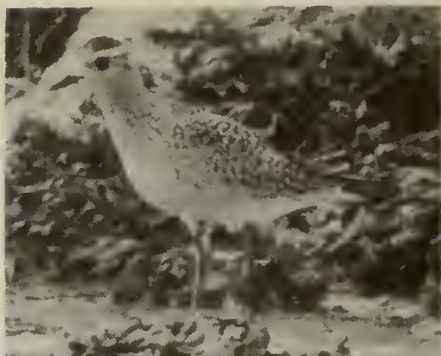
(North America) Also one at Ballycotton, Co. Cork, from 7th to 31st March. Five in one year is the most ever for this plover for which nearly all British and Irish records fall between November and March; many have stayed for some weeks.

Greater Sand Plover *Charadrius leschenaultii* (0, 1, 1)

Avon Chew Valley Lake, first-winter, 17th November to 10th February 1980 (C. J. Newman, K. E. Vinicombe *et al.*).

West Sussex Pagham Harbour, first-winter, since 9th December 1978 (*Brit. Birds* 72: 520), last seen 1st January, apparently moribund.

(Southern Russia east to Mongolia) Close on the heels of the first came the second, again when southern England is at its most inhospitable. Full details of both these records will be published shortly.



248-250. Juvenile Lesser Golden Plover *Pluvialis dominica* showing characters of the Nearctic race *P. d. dominica*, Scilly, September 1979 (B. J. Widdens; David Constantine; David Constantine)



Lesser Golden Plover *Pluvialis dominica* (6, 50, 4)

Cleveland Seal Sands, adult ♂ *P. d. dominica*, 2nd to 9th July (M. A. Blick, C. Clark *et al.*).

Scilly Mainly St Mary's, 12th to 21st September, then mainly St Agnes and Gugh to 16th October, juvenile, *P. d. dominica* (R. W. Allen, D. B. Hunt, D. G. H. Mills *et al.*) (plates 248-250).

1978 Cornwall Davidstow Airfield, 9th September to 13th October (*Brit. Birds* 72: 520), last seen 14th (C. G. Stack). Stithians Reservoir, *P. d. dominica*, 5th October to 8th November (*Brit. Birds* 72: 520; plate 219), now considered juvenile, not as stated, but that of 7th November remains a further individual.

(Arctic North America and northeast Asia) Also one at Ballycotton, Co. Cork, on 20th October, joined by a second from 29th to 4th November, one remaining to 6th. Four is about the average in recent years.

Sociable Plover *Chettusia gregaria* (5, 17, 1)

Kent Headcorn, first-winter, 15th to 21st December (N. R. Davies, E. C. Still *et al.*).

1977 Essex See Suffolk.

1977 Suffolk Little Cornard, adult, 27th December to 15th January 1978; also at Middleton and Great Henny nearby in Essex (*Brit. Birds* 71: 499); last seen 21st January 1978.

1978 Cornwall Hayle, immature, 11th to 16th October (*Brit. Birds* 72: 521); was first seen by B. S. Barnacal.

1978 Essex See Suffolk.

1978 Suffolk Individual first seen Little Cornard, 27th December 1977 (see above), last seen, probably in Essex, 21st January.

(Southeast Russia and west-central Asia) Prior to 1968 there were just eight British records, but there have now been 15 since (cf. in Netherlands, three records up to 1968 and nine since 1974: *Brit. Birds* 73: 258).

White-tailed Plover *Chettusia leucura* (0, 1, 1)

Dorset Abbotsbury, 3rd July (J. A. Alford).

(South Russia and Middle East, and west-central Asia) In contrast to the first British record, in Warwickshire in July 1975, this one was seen (and filmed) by just one fortunate observer.

White-rumped Sandpiper *Calidris fuscicollis* (24, 144, 5)

East Sussex Pett Level, immature, 28th September to 3rd October (C. H. Dean *et al.*).

Lothian Musselburgh, immature, 17th to 21st October (A. Stewart, Dr L. L. J. Vick *et al.*).

Norfolk Breydon Water, adult, 25th September (P. R. Allard).

Staffordshire Blithfield Reservoir, immature, 10th to 11th November and 8th to 10th December (C. Rutter, A. R. Dean *et al.*).

Suffolk Minsmere, adult, 16th August (F. K. Cobb).

1977 Essex Hanningfield Reservoir, 22nd to 23rd August (S. A. Webb).

1977 Kent Reculver, 3rd October (D. C. Gilbert).

1978 South Yorkshire Wath Ings, adult, 27th September to 12th October, trapped 1st (N. Addey, J. Hewitt, J. M. Turton).

1978 Suffolk Benacre, immature, 23rd October to 5th November (*Brit. Birds* 72: 521), last seen 9th November.

1978 Orkney North Ronaldsay, 2nd to 4th October (E. J. & R. J. Williams, Dr K. F. Woodbridge).

(North America) A late Irish record is of one at Lough Beg, Co. Derry, from 2nd to 11th November 1977. There was none in Ireland in 1979, but a typical series of autumn occurrences in Britain.

Baird's Sandpiper *Calidris bairdii* (5, 64, 8)

Cleveland Saltholme Marsh, 5th May (M. A. Blick, J. B. Dunnett, C. Sharp *et al.*).

Clwyd Connah's Quay, 7th August (R. W. Evans, M. Williams).

Humberside North Killingholme, 19th to 20th September (G. P. Catley, D. A. Robinson *et al.*).

Lothian Gladhouse Reservoir, 8th September (Dr L. L. J. Vick).

Strathclyde Near Bowmore, Islay, Argyll, 3rd June (E. Franklin, J. R. Hume).

(North America) Also singles at Akeragh Lough, Co. Kerry, on 31st August, at Ballycotton, Co. Cork, from 9th to 19th September (*Brit. Birds* 72: plate 257) and at Tacumshin Lake, Co. Wexford, from 22nd September to 3rd October. The best year for this 'peep' since 1967, including the second ever May record and the first in June.

Sharp-tailed Sandpiper *Calidris acuminata* (5, 10, 0)

1966 Surrey (then Middlesex) Staines Reservoirs, 28th September (*Brit. Birds* 60: 319), now withdrawn after review.

1978 Dorset Langton Herring, 2nd April (C. E. Richards), previously rejected (*Brit. Birds* 72: 545), now accepted after review.

(Northeast Siberia) A welcome review of the identification of this species and the very similar Pectoral Sandpiper *C. melanotos* has recently been published (*Brit. Birds* 73: 333-345).

Broad-billed Sandpiper *Limicola falcinellus* (23, 37, 2)

Gwent Peterstone Pill, 7th May (S. D. Enright, S. N. G. Howell, Dr W. A. Venables).

(North Eurasia) Also one at Ballycotton, Co. Cork, from 10th to 14th July, the fourth Irish record.

Stilt Sandpiper *Micropalama himantopus* (1, 11, 1)

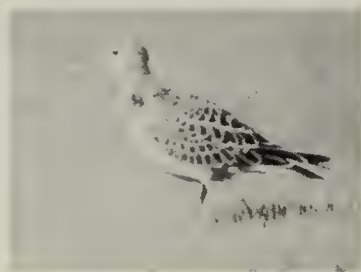
(North America) None in Britain, but one at Ballycotton, Co. Cork, from 14th to 17th July, the second Irish record and on a typically early date.

Buff-breasted Sandpiper *Tryngites subruficollis* (33, 301, 12)

Cornwall Davidstow Airfield and Stithians Reservoir, 14th to 20th September (F. H. C. & I. Kendall, G. P. Sutton, R. I. Thorpe *et al.*).

Dumfries & Galloway Caerlaverock, two juveniles, 18th to 20th September (M. Wright *et al.*) (plate 251).

251. Juvenile Buff-breasted Sandpiper *Tryngites subruficollis*, Dumfries & Galloway, September 1979 (Malcolm Wright)



Lancashire Near Glasson Dock, two, 25th August (K. Blamire, B. Townson). Clifton Marsh, 7th September (D. & Mrs G. Greenwood).

Lothian Musselburgh, 3rd August (P. M. Ellis, K. Shaw). Aberlady Bay, 4th to 8th August (A. Brown, G. L. Sandeman *et al.*).

1977 Shetland Fair Isle, 10th to 13th September (*Brit. Birds* 71: 501), present 11th to 12th only.

1978 Cornwall Davidstow Airfield, 12th to 16th September, same Crowdy Reservoir, 17th (*Brit. Birds* 72: 522), last seen 2nd October.

(North America) Also singles at Tacumshin Lake, Co. Wexford, on 11th August, at Ballycotton, Co. Cork, on 15th September, another at Tacumshin Lake from 16th to 22nd September and at North Slob, Co. Wexford, on 19th September. The least showing since 1972.

A correction to a 1977 Irish record: the one at Bann estuary, Co. Derry, was seen on 4th September, not 9th October as published (*Brit. Birds* 72: 523).

Long-billed Dowitcher *Limnodromus scolopaceus* (9, 46, 4)

Cheshire Frodsham, 29th September to at least 5th October (M. Garner *et al.*); probably same, Burton Marsh, 14th to at least 26th October (S. W. Holmes, M. Kelly *et al.*).

Essex Abberton Reservoir, juvenile, 28th September to 21st November, trapped 21st November (G. B. Brown, Dr S. Cox, R. King *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 72: plate 256).

Suffolk Minsmere, juvenile, 28th September to 10th October (J. Sorenson, G. R. & Mrs H. J. Welch).

1977 Suffolk Havergate, two, 22nd October to early 1978 (*Brit. Birds* 71: 503), remained until April (per D. R. Moore).

1978 Hampshire Keyhaven and Pennington Marshes, 5th to 24th April (M. C. Combridge, M. G. W. Terry, E. J. Wiseman).

1978 Scilly St Mary's, juvenile or first-winter (P. A. Frazer, A. J. Merritt, J. M. Turton *et al.*), previously accepted as dowitcher sp. (*Brit. Birds* 72: 524).

1978 Suffolk See above.

(North America and northeast Siberia) Also one at Tacumshin Lake, Co. Wexford, from 20th to 23rd September. A quartet conforming to the usual pattern.

Dowitcher *Limnodromus scolopaceus* or *L. griseus* (31, 87, 4)

1978 Avon Chew Valley Lake, 28th October (A. Ashman, D. Buffery, S. J. Wilkinson).

1978 Scilly St Mary's, 13th September (*Brit. Birds* 72: 524), now accepted, on new evidence, as Long-billed *L. scolopaceus*.

1978 South Yorkshire Potteric Carr, 12th September (L. Degnan, P. Greaves, N. Whitehorn).

(North America and northeast Siberia) Also singles at Giant's Causeway, Co. Antrim, on 12th February and at Lady's Island Lake, Co. Wexford, from 30th September to 1st October, with one at Ballycotton, Co.

Cork, from 14th October, joined by a second on 24th November, both staying into 1980.

Upland Sandpiper *Bartramia longicauda* (15, 16, 1)

West Sussex Bracklesham, first-winter, 21st to 23rd December (M. Shrubb *et al.*).

(North America) The latest of all records since 1958, although there is an older one for December.

Marsh Sandpiper *Tringa stagnatilis* (12, 13, 5)

Cambridgeshire Grafham Water, Huntingdonshire, 27th June (T. J. Stowe, R. Unite).

Kent Cliffe, adult, 20th to 25th August (A. Forsyth, A. T. M. Ruck, D. W. Taylor *et al.*).

Norfolk Cley, 14th to 18th August (D. S. Farrow *et al.*).

Orkney Bridesness Loch, North Ronaldsay, 23rd August (J. W. A. Cutt).

Strathclyde Dunfoot, 29th July (I. H. Leach).

(Southeast Europe and west and east Asia) The best year ever for this delightful wader. Two in Scotland is surprising, but there are previous records for Caithness and Shetland since 1958.

Greater Yellowlegs *Tringa melanoleuca* (12, 11, 1)

(North America) None in Britain, but one in Ireland at Lough Beg, Co. Derry, on 8th September.

Lesser Yellowlegs *Tringa flavipes* (35, 105, 1)

Staffordshire Blithfield Reservoir, 15th to 30th September (R. Farmer, G. M. Ireson, M. J. Warren *et al.*).

1978 Grampian Rattray Head, juvenile, 25th September (S. Howe, T. D. H. Merrie), probably same as Ythan Estuary individual, 7th October (*Brit. Birds* 72: 524).

1978 Suffolk Minsmere, 29th May to 5th June (R. Berry, G. J. Jobson, P. Thompson *et al.*).

(North America) Just one is the least showing since 1960. During 1958-78, this species was fourth in the league of Nearctic waders reaching our shores, after Pectoral Sandpiper *Calidris melanotos*, Buff-breasted Sandpiper *Tryngites subruficollis* and White-rumped Sandpiper *Calidris fuscicollis*, but it has now been overtaken by Wilson's Phalarope *Phalaropus tricolor*.

252. Juvenile Solitary Sandpiper *Tringa solitaria*, Cornwall. September 1979 (J. B. & S. Bottomley)



Solitary Sandpiper *Tringa solitaria* (6, 12, 1)

Cornwall Stithians Reservoir, juvenile, 10th to 19th September (M. C. & P. Combridge, M. A. Stewart *et al.*) (plate 252).

(North America) A typical record of this sandpiper, which remains a great rarity.

Terek Sandpiper *Xenus cinereus* (3, 14, 1)

Cleveland Teesmouth, 20th to 21st June (E. C. Gatenby, D. Sowerbutts).

(Northeast Europe and Siberia) All but three of the British records have been during May to early July.

Spotted Sandpiper *Actitis macularia* (6, 41, 3)

Dyfed Ynyshir, near Eglwysfach, adult, 7th to 12th August (W. Condry, P. E. Davis, R. Squires *et al.*).

Greater Manchester Ashworth Moor Reservoir, adult, 10th August (Dr J. B. Sykes).

Scilly Tresco, adult, 23rd September to at least 9th October (R. J. Fairbank, R. M. Lafontaine, K. C. Osborne *et al.*).

(North America) Three typical records.

Wilson's Phalarope *Phalaropus tricolor* (1, 98, 15)

Avon Chew Valley Lake, 20th to 21st September (M. S. Dugdale, M. P. Hastings, L. A. & N. A. Tucker *et al.*); first-winter, 29th September to 4th October (R. S. Harkness, K. E. Vinicombe *et al.*).

Berkshire Beenham, juvenile, 9th to 10th September (N. Cleere *et al.*).

Cambridgeshire/Norfolk Wisbech Sewage-farm, two, 29th August (Dr J. Lines, S. South).

Cleveland Long Drag and Dorman's Pool, two, one an adult, 31st August to 1st September, one to 3rd (G. Icton *et al.*).

Kent Dungeness, two, 27th August (R. A. J. Forsyth, S. W. Gale, T. G. Holder).

Norfolk Cley, ♀, 17th to 18th May (I. S. & R. B. Aitken *et al.*). See also Cambridgeshire/Norfolk.

West Sussex Pagham Harbour, adult, 26th to 27th August (M. C. Hodgson, T. H. Toohig *et al.*).

1977 Cleveland Saltholme Pools, 7th to 28th September (*Brit. Birds* 71: 504), first observers were M. Francis, J. A. Hazell, F. A. Whitford.

1977 Hampshire Dibden Bay, 9th October (*Brit. Birds* 71: 504), also 10th.

1978 Cheshire Burton Marsh, 15th to 19th August (M. S. Cavanagh, M. Eden, M. R. McDonnell *et al.*).

1978 West Sussex Pagham Harbour, 21st October (Dr W. M. & Mrs M. J. Ramsden).

(North America) Also four in Ireland, at Ballycotton, Co. Cork, from 1st to 4th August, at Inchydoney, Co. Cork, on 21st and 22nd August, at Sword's estuary, Co. Dublin, on 4th and 5th September and at Tacumshin Lake, Co. Wexford, from 15th to 19th September. The total exceeds the previous best year by two; the three records of two together might, of course, have involved the same birds.

Long-tailed Skua *Stercorarius longicaudus* (not known, not known, 34)

Cleveland Hartlepool, adult, 26th August (J. B. Dunnett, R. Little); juvenile, 30th September (R. Little).

Cornwall St Ives, juvenile, 6th November (R. Burrige, V. R. Tucker).

Derbyshire Stoney Middleton, juvenile, freshly dead, 5th October (per D. Whiteley), now at City of Sheffield Museum.

Grampian Kinnaird Head, immature, 14th August (D. I. M. Wallace).

Highland Handa Island, Sutherland, adult, 14th June (R. I. Thorpe).

Humberside Flamborough Head, adult, 27th July (P. A. Lassey, Miss I. Smith); adult, 10th September (P. A. Lassey); juvenile, 14th September (P. A. Lassey, Miss I. Smith); juvenile,

3rd October (D. I. M. Wallace); juvenile, 24th October (S. Elliot, S. C. Madge, J. Miles). Hornsea, two immatures, 8th August (W. F. Curtis, R. G. Hawley).

Kent Shellness, adult and juvenile, 22nd September (P. J. Grant).

Lincolnshire Mouth of River Welland, adult, 26th August (K. & R. Heath). Saltfleetby, juvenile, 15th September (G. P. Catley, B. M. Clarkson); two immatures, 21st October (G. P. Catley, M. Mellor). Donna Nook, adult, 30th September (S. Lorand); adult, 13th October (R. Lorand). Gibraltar Point, adult, 28th October (W. Simpson). Anderby Creek, juvenile, 4th October (K. Atkin, H. Bunn) (plate 253).



253. Juvenile Long-tailed Skua *Stercorarius longicaudus* (dark individual), Lincolnshire, October 1979 (K. Atkin)

Norfolk Winterton, adult or sub-adult, 25th August (P. R. Allard). Blakeney Point, immature, 26th August (P. K. Greaves, D. Page). Holme, adult, 22nd September (B. A. Combes, R. Murray).

Northumberland Holy Island, juvenile, freshly dead, 4th November (G. Hodgson, R. Swales), wings and tail retained by R. Swales.

North Yorkshire Staithes, adult, 21st August (G. R. & Mrs J. V. Harrison).

Shetland Papa Stour, first-summer, 15th July (P. J. Ewins, J. D. Okill).

Strathclyde Off Coll, Argyll, adult, 6th June (R. F. Coomber).

Western Isles Off Harris, three adults, 15th June; Little Minch, adult, 16th June (M. A. Blick, S. A. Webb *et al.*).

1976 Highland Chanonry Point, Ross & Cromarty, two juveniles, 27th September (R. H. Dennis). Craigton, Ross & Cromarty, juvenile, 27th September (R. H. Dennis).

1977 Cleveland South Gare, adult, 31st July (D. J. Britton).

1977 Highland Udale Bay, Ross & Cromarty, adult, 26th July (R. H. Dennis).

1977 Orkney North Ronaldsay, adult, 16th June, probably same to 12th August (J. W. A. Cutt, Dr K. F. Woodbridge).

1978 Cleveland South Gare, adult, 9th July (D. Page). Hartlepool, two adults, 23rd August (R. Little); adult, 26th (J. B. Dunnett, R. Little, D. Page); juvenile, 30th September (M. J. Gee); sub-adult, 1st October (M. J. Gee, G. Icton). Seaton Snook, juvenile, 23rd August (R. Little).

1978 Humberside Flamborough Head, adult, 28th August (P. A. Lassey, S. Rooke, Miss I. Smith). Spurn, adult, 28th August (B. Banson, N. J. Hodson, J. C. Lidgate *et al.*).

1978 Merseyside Hilbre, immature, 10th September (M. S. Cavanagh, M. I. Eldridge, M. R. McDonald); juvenile, 12th (J. C. Gittins, M. R. McDonald); immature, 14th (M. S. Cavanagh, M. R. McDonald); immature, 15th (M. R. McDonald); adult, 24th (M. S. Cavanagh, M. Eden, M. R. McDonald). Leasowe, sub-adult, 30th September (*Brit. Birds* 72: 525, plate 222), now considered to be adult in partial winter plumage.

1978 Norfolk Scolt Head, three juveniles, 27th August (S. C. Joyner, N. Williams).

1978 Northumberland Seahouses, adult, 24th June (K. Baldrige). Seaton Sluice, adult, 1st September (H. & M. Garrod, G. Sutton, K. Walton).

1978 Orkney Hoy, adult, 14th July (C. J. Booth).

1978 Western Isles Monach Isles, North Uist, two adults, 8th June (N. Brown); another two, 9th (N. Brown, J. Sutcliffe).

(North Europe and west Siberia) With about 293 during 1976-78, these

34 suggest a partial return to the average for the 1960s of about 20 per year, but a report of 27 passing north off the Western Isles in May has yet to be submitted to the committee.

Laughing Gull *Larus atricilla* (2, 19, 2)

Lincolnshire Donna Nook, second-winter, 24th February (S. Lorand). Huttoft Bank, first-winter, 6th October (E. J. Mackrill).

1978 Cornwall Newlyn Bay, first-winter, January to 23rd March (*Brit. Birds* 72: 526), last seen 27th (per D. J. Barker).

1978 Humberside Flamborough Head, adult, 19th September (A. Grieve, P. A. Lassey, Miss I. Smith). Bridlington, probably second-winter, 13th November (S. Rooke):

(North America and Caribbean) This species has now occurred in six of the last seven years.

Franklin's Gull *Larus pipixcan* (0, 5, 0)

1978 Suffolk Individual first seen Lowestoft, 13th November 1977 (*Brit. Birds* 71: 506; plates 186, 187, 213 & 214), last seen near Oulton Broad, 27th March (*Brit. Birds* 72: 527), again seen, Carlton Colville, 30th March.

(North America)

Bonaparte's Gull *Larus philadelphia* (11, 19, 2)

Humberside Grimsby Docks, probably first-winter, 17th March (G. P. Catley, M. Mellor).

(North America) Also an adult at Bangor, Co. Down, from 26th July to 2nd September (*Brit. Birds* 72: plate 234), reappearing on 31st December and staying into 1980: the second Irish record (the first being back in 1848).

Ring-billed Gull *Larus delawarensis* (0, 22, 7)

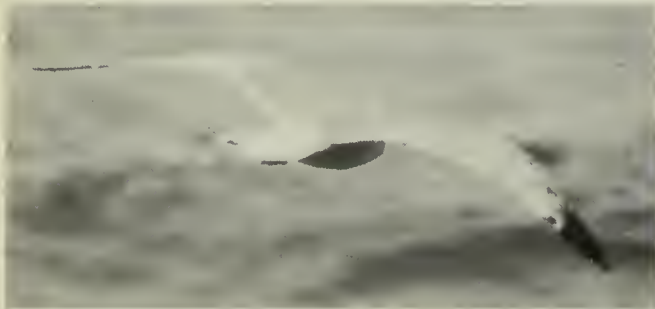
Cornwall Between Newlyn and Penzance, first-winter, 10th February to 11th April (W. R. Hirst, L. P. Williams *et al.*) (plates 254 & 255); second-winter, 11th February to 23rd March (W. R. Hirst *et al.*) (plates 256 & 257).

Grampian Lossiemouth, adult, 5th February (D. Allen).

Merseyside Alt Estuary, adult, 13th April (N. A. Preston).



254 & 255. First-winter Ring-billed Gull *Larus delawarensis*, Cornwall, February 1979 (W. R. Hirst)



256 & 257. Second-winter Ring-billed Gull *Larus delawarensis*, Cornwall, February 1979 (W. R. Hirst)

West Yorkshire Blackmoorfoot Reservoir, sub-adult, 23rd December (J. E. Dale).

1978 West Glamorgan Blackpill, adult, summer plumage, April to May (*Brit. Birds* 72: 527), first seen 6th April (M. C. Swan, I. Tew).

(North America) Also a first-winter bird at Belmullet, Co. Mayo, from 4th February to 6th August and an adult there from 4th February to 28th April, the first two Irish records. With four in 1977, eight in 1978 and now seven in 1979, it is amazing to realise that the species was not noted here until 1973.

Ross's Gull *Rhodostethia rosea* (2, 21, 1)

Shetland Mid Yell, adult, 3rd May (Mrs Nisbet, R. J. Tulloch).

1978 Tyne & Wear St Mary's Island, second-winter, 9th to 15th December (M. Henry, D. M. Turner *et al.*).

(Northeast Siberia) Described by the postmistress as 'a small, pink gull with a black ring round its neck', the breathless second-named observer had just a two-minute view before it flew out of the voe, never to reappear.

Ivory Gull *Pagophila eburnea* (76, 17, 2)

Northumberland Seahouses, first-winter, 23rd to 25th December (M. Hall, M. S. Hodgson *et al.*) (plate 99).

Shetland Sullom Voe, first-winter, 29th December (M. Heubeck, A. Philips, R. J. Tulloch *et al.*).

1976 Grampian West Hills of Skene, first-winter, 29th December to 3rd January 1977 (*Brit. Birds* 71: 508), was trapped and released on 29th, not as stated.

(High Arctic) Two typical records.

Gull-billed Tern *Gelochelidon nilotica* (53, 140, 2)

Dorset Radipole, 6th May (C. J. Hall *et al.*).

Kent Dungeness, 31st July (H. E., J. R. & P. J. Chantler, S. W. Gale).

(Almost cosmopolitan, nearest breeding colony in Denmark) A lean year for this tern: two-thirds of all records since 1958 have been in English south-coast counties from Kent to Cornwall.

Caspian Tern *Sterna caspia* (30, 103, 8)

Berkshire Theale, 12th August (M. Hallam, J. A. Lucas).

Gloucestershire Slimbridge, immature, 21st May (L. P. Alder).

Humberside Messingham, 4th July (J. T. Harriman, D. Suddaby). Spurn, 3rd August (D. Garratt); another, 14th (B. Banson, S. P. Clancy, B. R. Spence).

Lincolnshire Donna Nook, 14th July (S. Lorand).

Shetland West Voe of Sumburgh, 8th October (I. G. & Mrs C. D. Davidson).

Surrey Staines Reservoirs, 29th July (M. J. Rogers).

(Cosmopolitan except South America, but everywhere local) There have been two previous October occurrences.

Aleutian Tern *Sterna aleutica* (0, 0, 1)

Northumberland Farne Islands, 28th to 29th May (A. W. Ferguson, C. R. Heywood, A. R. Taylor *et al.*).

(Alaska, Kamchatka and Sakhalin) The first record for the western Palearctic, and totally unexpected. Full details will be published in due course.

Bridled Tern *Sterna anaethetus* (3, 2, 1)

Orkney Stormness, immature, 6th to 7th August (J. Hamilton).

(Oceanic islands from Caribbean east to Philippines and Australia) This is the first Scottish record and a month earlier than any of the four previous autumn records; there is also an April record.

Whiskered Tern *Chlidonias hybridus* (20, 49, 3)

Cambridgeshire Grafham Water, Huntingdon, first-winter, 8th to 23rd September (R. F. Porter *et al.*).

East Sussex Rye, two, 31st May to 4th June (Miss P. Haddon, R. R. Greenhalf, B. A. E. Marr *et al.*).

(South Eurasia, northwest, east and southern Africa, and Australia) The East Sussex record is only the second occasion that two have appeared together.

White-winged Black Tern *Chlidonias leucopterus* (50, 340, 25)

Avon Chew Valley Lake, two juveniles, 7th to 10th September; another, 8th to 10th (A. H. Davies, R. G. Thomas, K. E. Vinicombe). Yeo Estuary, juvenile, 19th August (Dr H. E. Rose).

Berkshire Theale, adult, 27th August (J. A. Lucas, A. Pym, C. C. White *et al.*).

Cheshire Frodsham, juvenile, 16th to at least 19th September (M. Barlow, A. Guilfoyle, S. W. Holmes *et al.*).

Cleveland Dorman's Pool, adult, 11th August; another, 3rd September (J. B. Dunnett *et al.*).

Cornwall Crowdy Reservoir, two, 13th May (M. P. Frost, F. H. C. & I. Kendall); another, 15th (E. Griffiths, J. H. Hawkey *et al.*).

Essex Abberton Reservoir, juvenile, 31st August to 5th September (G. B. Brown, D. R. Moore *et al.*). West Thurrock, 60km SE, 9th to 13th September (R. B. Hastings, A. V. Moon, P. Naylor *et al.*).

Gloucestershire Slimbridge, 18th to 19th May (J. D. Sanders, M. Smart *et al.*).

Hampshire Pennington Marsh, juvenile, 25th August (M. C. & P. Combridge).

Kent Dungeness, juvenile, 20th to at least 25th August (S. W. Gale, R. N. Hobbs *et al.*). Shellness, juvenile, 18th August (M. Frankling, A. T. M. Ruck *et al.*).

Leicestershire Eye Brook Reservoir, 6th June (K. Moulton).

Lothian Gladhouse Reservoir, adult, 12th August (Dr L. L. J. Vick).

Mid Glamorgan Kenfig Pool, 13th May (P. G. Lansdown, S. J. Moon, B. Rabbitts *et al.*).

Northamptonshire Ditchford Gravel-pits, juvenile, 27th to 28th August (C. S. Balchin, N. M. Butler, S. G. D. Cook *et al.*). Pitsford Reservoir, juvenile, 11th to 13th September (D. J. Burgess, P. W. Richardson *et al.*).

Suffolk Minsmere and Sizewell, juvenile, 15th to 18th September (M. C. Marsh, P. W. Murphy *et al.*). Walberswick, 22nd May (J. D. Bakewell, J. A. Lowe).

Tyne & Wear Jarrow Slake, adult, 2nd September (D. Fullerton).

1978 Humberside Hornsea Mere, 13th May (N. A. Bell, G. E. Dobbs).

1978 Leicestershire Eye Brook Reservoir, juvenile, 1st to 2nd August (R. E. Cox, P. A. Marsh, K. Spriggs *et al.*); another, 29th August to 4th September (F. C. Pickering *et al.*).

1978 Northamptonshire Stanford Reservoir, juvenile, 12th September (M. J. Townsend).

(Southeast Europe, west and east Asia) About the average for recent years.

Brünnich's Guillemot *Uria lomvia* (3, 7, 1)

Grampian Rattray Head, found dead, 25th February (R. Elliot), head and upper neck now at University of Aberdeen.

(Circumpolar Arctic) The fourth consecutive year of occurrence.

Great Spotted Cuckoo *Clamator glandarius* (6, 15, 3)

Cornwall Pentire Head, 11th to 16th April (A. D. & I. A. Callender, I. Prophet). St Just Airport, immature, 12th September (M. C. & P. Combridge).

Scilly Bryher, sub-adult, 13th April (D. B. Hunt, W. E. Oddie *et al.*).

(South Europe, southwest Asia and Africa) Cornwall and Scilly have now produced seven of the 18 records since 1958.

Yellow-billed Cuckoo *Coccyzus americanus* (22, 13, 2)

Dorset Portland, juvenile, 24th to 28th September, trapped 26th (W. E. Oddie, M. Rogers *et al.*) (plate 258).

(North America) Also one found dying at Lecarrow, Co. Sligo, on 31st October. The Dorset individual obliged hundreds of observers during its five-day stay.



258. Juvenile Yellow-billed Cuckoo *Coccyzus americanus*, Dorset, October 1979 (P. Wheeler)

Snowy Owl *Nyctea scandiaca* (many, 171, 6)

Shetland Fair Isle, two immature ♀♀, 17th April (I. S. Robertson, B. Sinclair, Mrs C. Thompson *et al.*) (plates 259-261); adult ♂, 19th to 22nd (D. Buffery, I. S. Robertson, N. Thompson *et al.*). Fetlar, two adult ♀♀ from late 1978 (*Brit. Birds* 72: 529), with a third, to 20th April; two at least end September; three, 31st July and 19th November; immature, possibly first-winter, 19th November; two adult ♀♀, 25th December (J. N. Dymond *et al.*). Ronas Hill, Mainland, ♀, 24th February (W. Fletcher, Ms R. Graham, C. Robson).

(Circumpolar Arctic) The first male to appear in Shetland since 1975 (the last year of breeding) did not find its way from Fair Isle to Fetlar.



259-261. Immature female Snowy Owl *Nyctea scandiaca*, Shetland, April 1979 (I. S. Robertson)

Pallid Swift *Apus pallidus* (0, 1, 0)

1978 Kent Stodmarsh, 13th to 21st May (C. R. Clark, W. G. Harvey, P. M. North *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 71: plate 135).

(Mediterranean, northern Africa and Middle East) After several near-misses, this sunshine swift is finally admitted to the British and Irish list. Full details will be published in due course.

Alpine Swift *Apus melba* (150, 138, 8)

Humberside Flamborough Head, 19th May (P. A. Lassey, Miss I. Smith). Mappleton, 23rd May (W. F. Curtis).

Man Calf of Man, 10th July (P. P. Jennings).

Norfolk Weybourne, 13th May (K. Bailey).

North Yorkshire Bempton, 19th May (M. Grose, S. Nason, T. J. Stowe *et al.*).

North Yorkshire/West Yorkshire Fairburn Ings, 21st May to 1st June; presumed same, 13th to 16th June (A. Burn, S. C. Madge *et al.*) (plate 262).

262. Alpine Swift *Apus melba*, North/West Yorkshire, May 1979 (S. J. Roddis)



Scilly St Agnes and St Mary's, 9th May (D. P. Wyatt).

West Sussex Chichester, 25th September (A. D. Fox).

(South Eurasia, northwest and east Africa) Also one at Tacumshin Lake, Co. Wexford, on 30th September. Seldom do any stay around for more than a day: that at Fairburn was very well-watched.

Belted Kingfisher *Ceryle alcyon* (1, 1, 1)

Cornwall Sladesbridge and area, 21st November (probably present since 2nd October) to at least June 1980 (S. C. Hutchings, E. G. Roper *et al.*).

(North America) An old record of one shot in Cornwall in November 1908 has now been accepted by the Records Committee of the British Ornithologists' Union as the first for Britain and Ireland, so that in Co. Mayo in December 1978 was the second, closely followed by the third which has thrilled many hundreds of birdwatchers during its stay of at least seven months. Full details will be published soon.

Bee-eater *Merops apiaster* (154, 96, 14)

Devon Newton Ferrers, 2nd June (G. E. & L. A. Carr).

Essex Thorndon Park, four, 24th to 25th April (C. Renley, G. A. Tyler *et al.*).

Gloucestershire South Cerney, 31st May (J. Dobson, R. & Mrs L. Nelson, C. & Mrs I. Twissell).

Hampshire Winchester, 19th August (R. J. King).

Kent St Margaret's Bay, 19th May (J. R. H. Clements). Near Iwade, 3rd July (T. Loseby).

Orkney Kirkwall, 15th to 26th July (C. J., C. M., P. N. & Mrs J. Booth *et al.*).

Suffolk Walberswick, 15th May; presumed same, Minsmere, 16th (G. R. Welch, T. Wheeler *et al.*).

Tyne & Wear Near South Hilton, 15th July (M. Duncton, S. Howat).

(South Europe, southwest Asia and northwest Africa) Also singles at Cape Clear Island, Co. Cork, on 2nd and 3rd June and at Lough Caragh, Co. Kerry, on 4th June. More than twice the yearly average since 1958 and exceeded only by the 20 in 1973.

Roller *Coracias garrulus* (135, 60, 2)

Highland Ledmore, Scotland, 7th June (Dr F. & Dr P. M. Hutchinson).

Shetland Whalsay, 5th to 7th June, found dead 9th (T. Arthur, Dr B. & M. Marshall *et al.*); skin now held by G. F. Miller.

1978 Devon Near Sidmouth, 21st to 25th May (M. R. Sherman).

(South and east Europe, west Asia and northwest Africa) For both 1979 records to be in the far north of Britain is unusual.

Short-toed Lark *Calandrella brachydactyla* (40, 159, 17)

Cornwall Nare Head, 10th to 13th May (W. B. Champion, G. S. Gay *et al.*).

Devon Lundy, 28th September (R. Campey, J. M. B. King).

Norfolk Weybourne, 25th to 26th September (G. E. Dunmore, K. B. Shepherd *et al.*); another, 16th to 20th October (M. Fiszer, G. S. & J. C. Marsham).

Scilly Bryher, 9th to 11th May (R. J. Gallop, D. B. Hunt, Mrs J. Webb). St Mary's, 23rd to 24th May (R. R. Drew *et al.*); present 4th to 15th October, two 4th to 14th, three 5th to 11th

(M. J. Rogers *et al.*); possibly another, 10th (P. S. Campbell, K. Dummigan *et al.*).

Shetland Fair Isle, 21st to 24th May (D. Buffery, I. S. Robertson, J. Watt *et al.*); 9th August to 8th September (N. R. Jones, I. S. Robertson, J. Wilson *et al.*); 3rd October (D. Buffery, N. R. Jones); 15th to 21st October (D. Buffery, N. R. Jones, I. S. Robertson *et al.*). Out Skerries, 25th May (Dr B. Marshall).

1973 Shetland Out Skerries, 4th to 10th October (*Brit. Birds* 67: 330), last seen 9th October, not as stated.

1974 Shetland Out Skerries, 11th to 20th November (*Brit. Birds* 68: 323), last seen 19th November, not as stated.

1978 Norfolk Weybourne, immature, 14th to 15th October; adult, 15th to 20th October (*Brit. Birds* 72: 530); observers of former relate to latter and *vice versa*.

(South Eurasia, north and east Africa) Also singles on Great Saltee Island, Co. Wexford, from 13th to 15th May, on Cape Clear Island, Co. Cork, from 30th September to 13th October and on Dursey Island, Co. Cork, on 3rd October. A very good showing by this lark, with the bulk in Shetland and Scilly as usual.

Red-rumped Swallow *Hirundo daurica* (7, 54, 4)

Humberside Flamborough Head, 23rd June (I. Forsyth, D. G. Hobson). Spurn, 19th May (S. M. Lister).

Norfolk Holme, trapped, 3rd June (P. R. Clarke).

Scilly Bryher, 14th April, then Tresco 17th to at least 23rd (T. P. Andrews, P. A. Dukes, J. D. Sanders *et al.*).

(South and east Eurasia, and Africa) Four typical records.

Richard's Pipit *Anthus novaeseelandiae* (135, 855, 43)

Avon Steep Holm, 17th September (A. J. Parsons, D. E. Reid).

Cornwall Porthgwarra, 20th October (W. R. Hirst, B. K. Mellow). Wadebridge, 13th November (S. M. Christophers).

East Sussex Beachy Head, 2nd November (R. H. & Mrs M. E. Charlwood).

Grampian Girdleness, 13th October (K. B. Shepherd *et al.*).

Lincolnshire Donna Nook, 30th September to 1st October, four on 1st; another 27th (K. Atkin, P. Haywood, R. & S. Lorand *et al.*).

Norfolk Weybourne, 28th to 29th September (K. Harrison, K. B. Shepherd, T. A. Walsh *et al.*). Sheringham, 13th October (Dr M. P. Taylor, T. A. Walsh *et al.*). Holme, 1st to 26th October (P. R. Clarke). Horsey Warren, 24th to 28th November (P. R. Allard, T. E. Boulton, R. Cobbold). Cley, 21st December to 1st January 1980 (P. A. Dukes *et al.*).

Northumberland Holy Island, 2nd October (J. R. Whitelegg).

Scilly St Agnes, 8th to 13th May (D. B. Hunt *et al.*); two, 17th to 19th October (M. Dale, A. R. Dean, P. G. Lansdown *et al.*). St Mary's, at least 13: 25th September to 4th October (D. G. H. Mills, N. A. Preston *et al.*); 5th to 11th October (J. F. Cooper, B. P. Walker, P. J. Wilson *et al.*); another two, 6th October (K. Foundation, R. Platts, J. M. Turton); 17th to 23rd (G. Bond, P. S. Campbell, K. Dummigan *et al.*); 20th to 30th October, two, 22nd to at least 25th (J. F. Cooper, B. P. Walker, G. White *et al.*); another two, 21st, one to 25th (R. J. Fairbank, C. D. R. Heard, P. Walton *et al.*); another, 2nd November, and, probably same, 11th (M. S. Chapman, C. Robson); elsewhere, at least three, possibly six, 8th to 17th November (D. B. Hunt, R. O'Reilly, C. Robson).

Shetland Fair Isle, at least ten: 1st to 15th October, four, 2nd, five, 6th, three, 13th; another two, 18th to 19th; one, 20th; two, 22nd; another, 26th; additional, juvenile, trapped 15th (I. S. Robertson *et al.*).

1977 East Sussex Langney Point, 5th October (R. H. & Mrs M. E. Charlwood).

1978 East Sussex Cuckmere Haven, 7th to 8th November (R. H. & Mrs M. E. Charlwood).

1978 Humberside Spurn, 29th October (A. Gibson, K. Rotherham).

1978 Norfolk Sheringham, 2nd October (P. E. Geary, G. S. & J. C. Marsham).

1978 Northumberland Low Hauxley, 1st October (B. Galloway, E. R. Meek *et al.*).

(West Siberia east to Mongolia and southeast to New Zealand, also Africa) Also one at Dursey Island, Co. Cork, on 21st October. Falling well

short of the influxes of 1977 and the late 1960s, but nonetheless a good series. Although the great majority occur in September and October, midwinter and spring records, such as those in Norfolk and Scilly respectively, are not without precedent.

Tawny Pipit *Anthus campestris* (120, 405, 21)

Cornwall Porthgwarra, 6th to 7th October (W. R. Hirst, L. P. Williams).

East Sussex Beachy Head, 7th September (R. H. Charlwood); 28th (Mrs M. E. Charlwood); 5th October (R. H. & Mrs M. E. Charlwood, A. Quinn).

Fife Leuchars, 1st June (T. W. Dougall).

Kent St Margaret's Bay, 21st April (A. J. Greenland); 9th September (J. R. H. Clements, A. J. Greenland). Sandwich Bay, 27th May (M. Briggs). Reculver, 16th September (C. H. Hindle).

Norfolk Winterton, 22nd April (P. R. Allard, S. G. D. Cook, J. Ward *et al.*); 5th June (R. Cobbold, M. Fiszer).

Scilly St Agnes, 7th to 14th October (P. A. Dukes, M. Parker, J. Wolstencroft *et al.*). St Mary's, six: 24th September (N. A. Preston, M. J. Rogers); 5th to 14th October (J. F. Cooper, M. J. Donahue, C. McCarty *et al.*); 6th to 13th, two 6th to 10th (J. F. Cooper, M. J. Rogers *et al.*); two, 7th to 10th (J. F. Cooper, P. J. Wilson *et al.*). Bryher, 13th October (A. Clarke, D. G. H. Mills, D. Page *et al.*), probably one of St Mary's individuals.

Suffolk Sizewell, 20th August to 10th September (G. S. Bowen, N. J. Harding, G. J. Jobson *et al.*). Landguard Point, 13th October (A. A. Butcher, M. C. Marsh, A. R. J. Paine *et al.*).

1977 East Sussex Beachy Head, 18th September (R. H. Charlwood).

1978 North Yorkshire Filey Brigg, 7th August (P. J. Dunn).

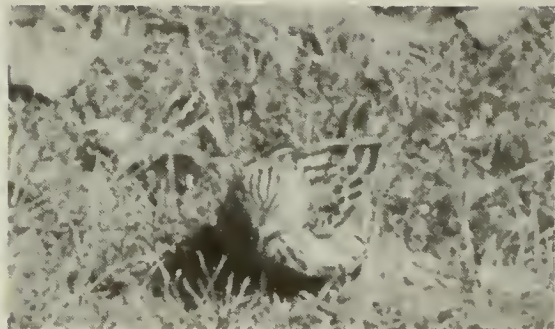
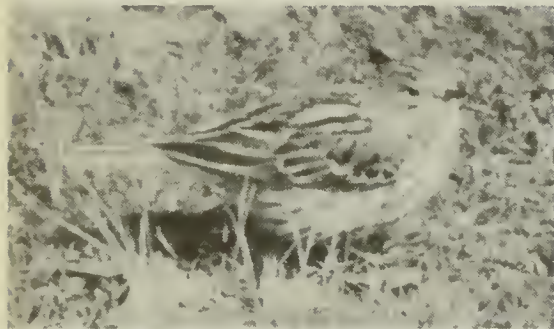
(Europe, south Asia and northwest Africa) Rather fewer than the average in recent years.

Red-throated Pipit *Anthus cervinus* (30, 99, 7)

Dorset Portland, 13th October (R. J. Johns, W. E. Oddie, G. Walbridge).

Scilly St Mary's, 6th October (R. J. Fairbank, N. A. Preston, M. J. Rogers *et al.*).

Shetland Fair Isle, 22nd to 23rd May (R. W. Adam, J. Potter, I. S. Robertson *et al.*) (plates 263 & 264).



263 & 264. Red-throated Pipit *Anthus cervinus*, Shetland, May 1979 (I. S. Robertson)

Somerset Steart, two, 7th October (P. L. Garvey). Sutton Bingham Reservoir, 27th October (B. J. Matthews).

1975 Shetland Fair Isle, two, 24th to 25th May, three, 26th, one staying to 27th, one to 28th and one to 31st; 4th June (*Brit. Birds* 69: 352); as stated, a minimum of four individuals, but dates now given as 24th to 29th and 31st May, two on 24th; two, including another, 26th to 27th; another, 4th June.

(Arctic Eurasia) Also one at Dursey Island, Co. Cork, on 23rd October. For only one out of the seven to be in spring is against the trend of recent years.

Yellow Wagtail *Motacilla flava* (3, 10, 0)

1978 Scilly Tresco, adult ♂, showing characters of the distinctive subspecies *M. f. feldegg*, colloquially known as Black-headed Wagtail, 26th June (D. J. Gilroy, D. B. Hunt).

(Balkans, south Russia and Asia Minor to Afghanistan) Another had been seen in Cornwall on 5th June 1978 (*Brit. Birds* 72: 532).

Thrush Nightingale *Luscinia luscinia* (2, 38, 1)

Scilly St Mary's, first-winter, 28th September to at least 2nd October (R. J. Fairbank, R. Grimmett, F. Lambert *et al.*).

(Scandinavia, east Europe and west Asia) This is the first occurrence in Britain to the west and south of a line from Kent to Bardsey Island, Gwynedd, and there are no Irish records.

Nightingale *Luscinia megarhynchos* (0, 1, 0)

1971 Shetland Fair Isle, found dead, 30th October (*Brit. Birds* 65: 341), previously accepted as showing the characters of the eastern race *L. m. hafizi*, now considered as belonging to the *africana-hafizi* group but with characters closest to *hafizi*.

(East from southern USSR and Afghanistan)

Black Redstart *Phoenicurus ochruros* (0, 2, 0)

Individuals showing the characters of one or other of the intergrading southern/eastern populations *P. o. ochruros-semirufus-phoenicuroides* were recorded as follows:

1975 Scilly Bryher, ♀ or immature, 13th October (D. I. M. Wallace).

1978 Lincolnshire Saltfleetby, adult ♂, 15th to 17th October (K. Atkin, G. P. Catley, S. Lorand *et al.*).

(East from southern USSR and Iran)

Stonechat *Saxicola torquata* (1, 30, 6)

Individuals showing the characters of one or other of the eastern races *S. t. maura* or *stejnegeri*, colloquially known as Siberian Stonechats, were recorded as follows:

Cambridgeshire Ouse Washes, ♀ or immature, race indeterminate, 24th November (R. A. Hume).

Dorset Portland, ♀ or immature, indeterminate, 11th October (G. Armstrong, M. Rogers, G. Walbridge).

Grampian Newburgh, ♂, indeterminate, 1st to 4th November (R. A. Schofield *et al.*).

Scilly St Mary's, ♂, indeterminate, 14th to at least 20th October (A. Adams, J. F. Cooper, J. M. Turton *et al.*).

Shetland Spiggie Loch, ♀ or immature, indeterminate, 31st October (J. N. Dymond).

Suffolk Landguard Point, ♀ or immature, indeterminate, 13th October (M. C. Marsh, P. W. Murphy, A. R. J. Paine *et al.*).

1972 Norfolk Cley, ♂, 6th May, showing characters of *S. t. maura* or *stejnegeri* (*Brit. Birds* 69: 361); now considered to show characters of *stejnegeri* (*Brit. Birds* 70: 237-245), and date under latter reference wrongly given as 2nd May.

1977 Suffolk Benacre, 29th September to at least 2nd October (*Brit. Birds* 71: 516), last seen 5th (Dr S. Cox).

(East from northeast Russia) Stonechats have been getting critical field examination in recent years: there have now been 31 of these Siberian birds in the last six years, three in May, three in September, 21 in October and four in November.

Isabelline Wheatear *Oenanthe isabellina* (1, 1, 1)

Grampian Girdleness, immature, at least 17th October to 10th November, trapped 23rd (M. A. S. Beaman, Dr A. G. Knox, T. P. Milsom *et al.*).

(Southeast Europe east to Mongolia) Only the third ever, this long-

staying individual induced innumerable pilgrimages from south of the border.

Pied Wheatear *Oenanthe pleschanka* (3, 3, 1)

Northumberland Boulmer, adult ♂, 28th to 29th October, trapped 28th (B. Armstrong, Mr & Mrs G. Cox, E. R. Meek *et al.*) (plate 265).

(Southeast Europe and south-central Asia) Four of the previous six have been within ten days of this date.



265. Adult male Pied Wheatear *Oenanthe pleschanka*, Northumberland, October 1979 (*P. Wheeler*)

Black-eared Wheatear *Oenanthe hispanica* (15, 17, 1)

Shetland Fair Isle, ♀, trapped, 18th June (D. Buffery, N. R. Jones, I. S. Robertson) (plates 266 & 267).

(Southern Europe, northwest Africa and southwest Asia, also Iran) This worn adult showed characters of the eastern race *O. h. melanoleuca*.



266 & 267. Adult female Black-eared Wheatear *Oenanthe hispanica*, Shetland, June 1979 (*I. S. Robertson*)

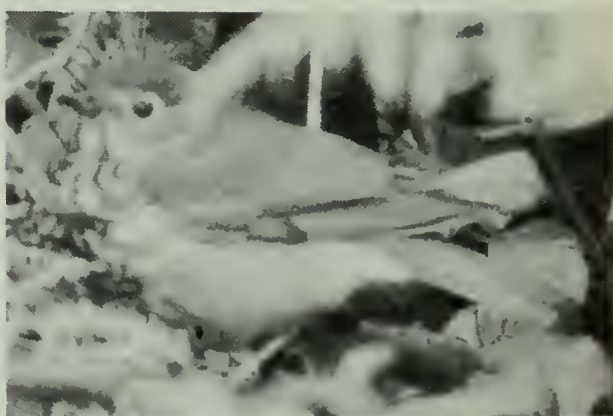
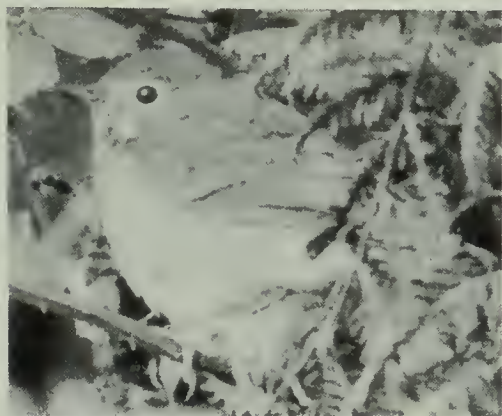
Rock Thrush *Monticola saxatilis* (6, 6, 1)

Scilly St Mary's, 19th May (R. W. Allen, W. R. Hirst, D. B. Hunt *et al.*).

(Central and southern Eurasia) The first since 1974 and on a typical date.

Swainson's Thrush *Catharus ustulatus* (1, 3, 3)**Cornwall** Near St Just, 21st October (T. R. Polglaze, W. R. Hirst *et al.*).**Scilly** St Mary's, at least one first-winter, 20th to 28th October (M. S. Chapman, P. A. Dukes, B. P. Walker *et al.*) (plates 268 & 269). Tresco, 23rd to 28th October (M. Coath, D. B. Hunt, H. P. K. Robinson *et al.*).

(North America) The first multiple arrival of this thrush, echoing that of the next species in 1976. None of the previous four has been in southwest England.



268 & 269. First-winter Swainson's Thrush *Catharus ustulatus*, Scilly, October 1979 (Ken Osborne)

Grey-cheeked Thrush *Catharus minimus* (1, 12, 1)**Scilly** St Mary's, first-winter, 27th October to 15th November (R. H. & Mrs M. E. Charlwood, D. B. Hunt, T. P. Inskipp *et al.*).

(North America) This is the first occasion that two species of the genus have been present in one locality at the same time, and the Scilly observers were given a unique Palearctic opportunity to sort out the identification criteria.

Dusky Thrush *Turdus naumanni* (1, 4, 1)**West Midlands** Shirley, 17th or 18th February, again 27th to 28th February and again 18th to 19th and 23rd March (R. K. & Mrs S. M. Panteny, Dr M. Hemming).

(Northern and central Siberia) Three of the previous five have been in Shetland, one was in Co. Durham and the first, in 1905, was inland in Nottinghamshire.

Black-throated Thrush *Turdus ruficollis* (3, 6, 1)**Northumberland** Holy Island, ♂, *T. r. atrogularis*, 28th January (A. Blackett, Miss M. Etherington *et al.*).

(Central Asia) The sixth consecutive year that this Asian thrush has reached Britain; four of the previous nine records have been during December to February.

Lanceolated Warbler *Locustella lanceolata* (9, 17, 1)**Shetland** Fair Isle, immature, trapped, 20th September (C. J. Mackenzie-Grieve, I. S. Robertson, C. Robson *et al.*).

(East Eurasia from central Russia to north Japan) A typical record of this mouse-like skulker; all but three of the British records have been from Fair Isle, the others being in Lincolnshire (1909), Orkney (1910) and Out Skerries, Shetland (1978).

Savi's Warbler *Locustella luscinioides* (many, 243, 41)

Devon Slapton Ley, ♂♂, 16th to 22nd April, two, 16th to 21st (R. M. Belringer, J. C. Nicholls, R. Williams *et al.*). Otter Estuary, ♂, 22nd April and 4th to 8th May (Mrs E. J. Brookes, R. M. Cox).

Dorset Radipole, ♂, 13th May (A. Pym *et al.*).

East Sussex Beachy Head, 1st September (R. H. & Mrs M. E. Charlwood).

Kent Stodmarsh and Middle Stour area, up to nine localities, 9th April to 22nd August, six territories held, at least four pairs attempted breeding, three successfully (per W. G. Harvey, P. J. Mountford).

Lancashire Leighton Moss, ♂, 20th April to 1st May (P. J. Marsh, R. Squires *et al.*); possibly another, 25th May to at least 7th June (T. Jorgenson, P. J. Marsh, M. Robinson *et al.*).

Norfolk Locality A, 13th April to 15th August, two ♂♂ from 5th May, four ♂♂ from 6th August, at least one pair reared young (per M. J. Seago). Locality B, present from at least 12th May, at least two ♂♂ and one other (per M. J. Seago). Locality C, pair present during breeding season (per M. J. Seago). Cley, ♂, 24th to 28th April (M. Birkwell, M. Taylor *et al.*).

Suffolk Locality A, up to two ♂♂, 14th May to 20th July (per D. R. Moore). Locality B, ♂ 12th May and throughout breeding season; possibly another 12th May only (per D. R. Moore).

County withheld Locality withheld, pair, 27th April to 4th July, further ♂, 27th April (observers' names withheld).

1977 Devon South Milton Ley, ♂, 10th May to 4th June (*Brit. Birds* 71: 519), was trapped 10th May.

1977 Kent Locality withheld, 24th April to 4th September, one pair bred (*Brit. Birds* 71: 519), now rejected on evidence of sound-recording.

(Europe, west and central Asia and northwest Africa) The third consecutive good year in established sites, but there remain apparently suitable reedbeds in southern England that have yet to attract this species on a regular basis.

Moustached Warbler *Acrocephalus melanopogon* (8, 1, 1)

West Sussex Angmering, 18th August (Dr M. & Mrs O. M. Hollings).

(Mediterranean region, eastern Europe and southwest Asia) The first record since one was trapped in Buckinghamshire in 1965.

Aquatic Warbler *Acrocephalus paludicola* (47, 484, 22)

Cornwall Long Rock, Marazion, immatures, all trapped, 27th August; two, 24th September; another, 1st October (B. Pattenden *et al.*). Landulph Marsh, immature, 7th September (S. M. Christophers). Drift Reservoir, immature, 15th September (J. C. Nicholls).

Devon Dawlish Warren, adult, 25th August (M. Langman, J. C. Nicholls *et al.*).

Dorset Lodmoor, immature, trapped, 22nd August (T. Squire); another, trapped, 23rd September (I. Lewis, T. Squire); another, age not known, 3rd October (M. Cade). Portland, immature, trapped, 30th September (M. Rogers, G. Walbridge).

Gloucestershire Frampton-on-Severn, immature, trapped, 12th August (J. W. Hale, A. Webb).

Kent Minster, immature, trapped, 25th August (A. Thorpe, D. C. H. Worsfold). Cliffe, 21st September (J. C. Martin).

Lincolnshire Saltfleetby, 29th October (E. J. Mackrill).

Mid Glamorgan Kenfig Pool, immature, trapped, 19th August (S. J. Moon, W. Nelson, Miss C. F. Tyson *et al.*); probably same, 20th (N. Odin).

Scilly St Mary's, 1st to 9th October (P. Aston, M. S. Chapman, A. G. Clarke *et al.*).

Shetland Fair Isle, three immatures, one trapped, 18th August, one remaining to 20th (D. Buffery, N. R. Jones *et al.*).

Somerset Steart, immatures, trapped, 16th August; 25th September (A. W. Evans).

1972 Surrey Badshot Lea Pond, 21st to 22nd September (J. M. Clark).

1976 Dorset Radipole, 10, all trapped: adult ♀, 10th August; immatures, 11th; 13th; 14th (S. N. Delaney, K. R. Grant, C. M. Reynolds); two immatures, 17th (S. N. Delaney, K. R.

Grant, A. V. Lee); further immatures, 19th (A. V. Lee, J. Oakshatt, G. Pepler); 22nd; 24th (S. N. Delaney, A. V. Lee, J. Oakshatt); 25th (A. V. Lee, J. Oakshatt, B. R. Watmough).

1977 Dorset Radipole, two immatures, trapped, 17th August, one retrapped 18th (A. C. Hereward, J. Oakshatt, G. Pepler); another, trapped, 30th (A. C. Hereward, J. Oakshatt).

1978 Dorset Radipole, adult and immature, trapped, 23rd August (*Brit. Birds* 72: 536), immature retrapped 26th; another immature, trapped, 27th (Mrs A. L. Goodall, A. C. Hereward, G. Pepler).

(East Europe and Urals) The corrected totals for the 1970s are 12 in 1970, then 27, 60, 53, 15, 55, 93, 34 and 13, so these 22 are well below the average.

Great Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus arundinaceus* (23, 90, 8)

Borders St Abb's, Berwickshire, 29th to 30th May (G. L. Sandeman *et al.*).

Gloucestershire Cotswold Water Park, in song, 23rd to 26th June (Mrs S. C. Holland, D. V. Mardle *et al.*).

Gwynedd Bardsey, 8th June (M. A. Peacock, P. J. Roberts, C. D. Rowley).

Lincolnshire Burton, in song, 6th to 22nd July (J. R. Clarkson, A. C. Sims *et al.*).

Shetland Gott, 10th to 11th June (C. Byers, M. S. Chapman *et al.*).

Warwickshire Brandon, trapped, 10th June (M. Boilstone, W. Jackson, F. Stokes *et al.*).

West Sussex Chichester Gravel-pits, in song, 2nd to 3rd June (Miss J. V. Stacey *et al.*).

(Europe, southwest and east Asia, north Africa) Also one on Cape Clear Island, Co. Cork, on 18th May, the third Irish record. A good year for this throaty songster.

Spectacled Warbler *Sylvia conspicillata* (0, 2, 1)

Shetland Fair Isle, ♂, 4th to 5th June (N. R. Jones, W. E. Oddie *et al.*).

(Southwest Europe, Middle East, north Africa, Madeira, Canary and Cape Verde Islands) The third British record of this rather sedentary and local warbler, but the first in spring, the previous two being at Spurn, Humberside, in October 1968 and Porthgwarra, Cornwall, in October 1969.

Subalpine Warbler *Sylvia cantillans* (12, 62, 10)

Fife Isle of May, ♀, 23rd May to 1st June, trapped 23rd and 25th (G. L. A. Patrick *et al.*).

Kent Dungeness, ♂, 2nd June (N. R. Davies). Sandwich Bay, ♀, trapped, 17th June (D. M. Batchelor).

Scilly St Mary's, adult ♂, 13th October (R. Platts, J. M. Turton *et al.*).

Shetland Fair Isle, ♀, 1st to 10th June, trapped 1st (D. Bullery, N. R. Jones, I. S. Robertson *et al.*); 4th October (W. Russell). Whalsay, ♂, trapped, 21st May (J. L. Irvine, Dr B. & Mrs L. M. Marshall, M. Williamson *et al.*).

Western Isles St Kilda, ♂ showing characters of *S. c. albistriata*, 2nd to 14th June (J. Buchanan, J. Hobson, C. A. Mason *et al.*).

(South Europe, west Turkey and northwest Africa) Also a male trapped on Great Saltee Island, Co. Wexford, on 31st May and a male on Cape Clear Island, Co. Cork, from 25th September to 3rd October. A return to form after just one in 1978: in fact, the best showing ever.

Sardinian Warbler *Sylvia melanocephala* (1, 5, 1)

Lincolnshire Gibraltar Point, ♂, 30th June to 15th September, trapped 30th June, 28th July and 6th September (P. R. Boyer, S. Davies, R. Lambert *et al.*).

(South Europe, Middle East and north Africa) A long stay by this scrub-loving warbler at a locality that has so much scrub that non-ringers may be forgiven for tearing their hair out in frustration.

Rüppell's Warbler *Sylvia rueppelli* (0, 1, 1)**Devon** Lundy, ♂, 1st to 10th June, trapped 4th (D. Carey, M. Davis, R. Campey *et al.*).

(Coastal regions of east Mediterranean) Only two years after the first record, in Shetland, comes the second at a locality that rarely comes within the scope of twitchers: on this occasion, nearly a hundred were fortunate in finding places on an annual excursion steamer to this enchanting, but very under-watched, island.

Desert Warbler *Sylvia nana* (0, 3, 1)**Merseyside** Meols, 28th October to 22nd November, showing characters of the Asian race *S. n. nana* (H. T., I. G., J. & T. K. Bradshaw, D. Short *et al.*) (plate 6).

(Middle East, central Asia and northwest Sahara) The fourth record of this truly desert-loving warbler; all have shown the characters of the eastern population.

Greenish Warbler *Phylloscopus trochiloides* (13, 118, 2)**Man** Calf of Man, trapped, 25th June (P. P. Jennings, J. P. Redwood).**Shetland** Fair Isle, first-winter, trapped, 19th August (D. Buffery, M. J. Gee, N. R. Jones *et al.*).

(Eurasia east from northern Germany) The least showing since 1971: since then there have been ten spring/summer records, 24 in August, 15 in September and three in October.

Arctic Warbler *Phylloscopus borealis* (19, 81, 3)**Cleveland** Hartlepool, 4th to 5th October (M. A. Blick, J. Crussell, A. J. Wheeldon *et al.*).**Grampian** Foveran Links near Newburgh, 19th August (T. P. Milsom).**Shetland** Whalsay, first-winter, trapped, 2nd September (Dr B. Marshall).**1978 Shetland** Unst, 1st to 2nd October (M. Sinclair, I. Spense).

(North Fenno-Scandia east to Alaska) Three typical records.

Pallas's Warbler *Phylloscopus proregulus* (3, 112, 10)**Cornwall** Porthgwarra, 19th October (J. A. Hazell *et al.*).**Dorset** Portland, trapped, 15th October (D. Peart, M. Rogers, G. Walbridge).**Grampian** Girdleness, 16th October (S. T. Buckland).

Humberside Flamborough Head, 27th October (D. G. Hobson, P. A. Lassey, Miss I. Smith); possibly same, 3km distant, 28th to 29th, trapped 28th (D. G. Hobson, P. A. Lassey, S. C. Madge *et al.*). Spurn, trapped, 11th October (A. Crawthorne, B. R. Spence, R. & Mrs R. Spencer); another, possibly two, 14th (B. G. & Mrs J. M. Pepper, G. Smith, B. R. Spence *et al.*).

Lincolnshire Saltfleetby, 27th to 28th October, trapped 27th (G. P. Catley, P. Childs, J. R. Walker). Trusthorpe, 22nd October (E. J. Mackrill).

Shetland Fair Isle, 6th October (D. Buffery *et al.*).**West Sussex** Church Norton, 15th November (B. F. & F. J. Forbes *et al.*).**1975 Fife** Isle of May, 21st October (*Brit. Birds* 69: 350), also seen 22nd.**1978 Shetland** Unst, 15th October (C. Corkeney).

(Central, east and southeast Asia) There were 18 records during 1958-67, then 91 during 1968-77, so these ten are about the average for recent years, but note that both 1969 and 1973 were blank years.

Radde's Warbler *Phylloscopus schwarzi* (1, 24, 3)**Fife** Fife Ness, trapped, 5th October (Dr J. L. S. Cobb).**Grampian** Cruden Bay, 7th October (W. R. Brackenridge).**Scilly** St Agnes, 20th October (J. M. Dale, D. Sykes, J. Wolstencroft *et al.*).

(Central and east Asia) Three typical records.

Dusky Warbler *Phylloscopus fuscatus* (1, 24, 1)**Scilly** St Agnes, 23rd to 25th October (R. H. & Mrs M. E. Charlwood *et al.*).**1978 Kent** Sandwich Bay, 11th to 15th November (*Brit. Birds* 72: 538), was trapped 11th.

(Central and northeast to southeast Asia) It is somewhat unusual for one to reach Scilly in a year when none was discovered on the east coast of England.

Bonelli's Warbler *Phylloscopus bonelli* (3, 58, 3)**East Sussex** Beachy Head, 5th May (J. F. Cooper). Rye, at least 28th August to 1st September (R. F. Porter *et al.*).**Shetland** Whalsay, first-winter, 21st to 22nd September, trapped 22nd (Dr B. Marshall).**1978 Kent** St Nicholas-at-Wade, 19th August (R. E. C. Collins, W. G. Harvey); previously rejected (*Brit. Birds* 72: 547), now accepted on further consideration.

(Central, west and south Europe, Levant and northwest Africa) Three records is about par for this species and, with a late acceptance for 1978, 1969 becomes the last blank year.

Collared Flycatcher *Ficedula albicollis* (2, 6, 1)**Shetland** Bressay, ♂, 23rd to 24th May (Mrs C. Filmore, J. D. Okill *et al.*).

(Central and southeast Europe, west Russia and south to Iran) Each of the last three records of this species has been in Shetland in May.

Isabelline Shrike *Lanius isabellinus* (1, 13, 1)**Shetland** Fair Isle, 24th October (Dr D. T. & Mrs P. Parkin, I. S. Robertson).**1978 Cambridgeshire** Hemingford Grey, Huntingdonshire, adult ♂, showing characters of *L. i. isabellinus*, 8th October (*Brit. Birds* 72: 539), now considered as belonging to intergrading populations *isabellinus-phoenicuroides* with characters closest to the latter.**1978 Lincolnshire** Donna Nook, immature, 28th to 30th October (*Brit. Birds* 72: 539; plate 229), was trapped 28th.**1978 Scilly** St Agnes and Gugh, 26th to at least 27th October (M. F. Brown, K. Moir, G. M. Yates *et al.*).

(South Asia to China) The fifth consecutive year of occurrence for this complex species, there having been none during 1963-74.

Lesser Grey Shrike *Lanius minor* (32, 77, 1)**Norfolk** Ringstead, 22nd July to 3rd September (H. & M. Ramsay *et al.*).

(South and east Europe and southwest Asia) This shrike remains a very rare visitor, but occurs more regularly in East Anglia than any other region.

Woodchat Shrike *Lanius senator* (101, 276, 10)**Cornwall** Caerthillian Cove, 12th to 14th May (B. Cave, E. Grace, Dr G. W. Davis *et al.*). Porthgwarra, 19th to 27th May (J. H. Hawkey, H. P. K. Robinson *et al.*).**Devon** Lundy, juvenile, trapped, 5th September (R. W. Britton, A. M. Taylor *et al.*); another, 7th to 13th (R. Campey, S. Tanner *et al.*).**Dorset** Portland, juvenile, 10th to 11th August (R. A. Ford, M. Rogers *et al.*).**Kent** Sandwich Bay, juvenile, 7th to 9th October, trapped 9th (D. M. Batchelor).**Scilly** St Mary's, 15th May to 10th June (M. Goodey, D. B. Hunt, B. Nightingale *et al.*); juvenile, 21st September to 1st October (R. M. Lafontaine, D. G. H. Mills, D. van der Elst *et al.*); another, 4th October (M. S. Chapman, J. C. Nicholls *et al.*).**1973 Scilly** Gugh, 1st June (G. Ashby, S. C. Joyner, A. Palmer).**1977 Devon** Lundy, adult, 12th July (*Brit. Birds* 71: 523), was trapped.**1977 Gwynedd** Bardsey, juvenile, 26th August (*Brit. Birds* 71: 523), was trapped.**1978 Kent** Minster, juvenile, 8th October (C. H. Hindle, D. C. H. Worsfold *et al.*).**1978 South Yorkshire** Dunsville, 28th May (Miss K. J. Martin, S. Wildman).

(West, central and south Europe, southwest Asia and north Africa) Also

an immature at Hook Head, Co. Wexford, on 25th August. Rather below average for this species, southwestern localities as ever being the best bet.

Nutcracker *Nucifraga caryocatactes* (45, 352, 1)

Cumbria Walney, 1st December (J. Deakin, T. Dean, A. & R. Normand *et al.*).

(Eurasia from Scandinavia and the Alps to Kamchatka and China)

Despite a number of autumn records in recent years, since the 1968-69 invasion, midwinter occurrences were the norm in earlier years.

Rose-coloured Starling *Sturnus roseus* (160, 93, 7)

Borders Eyemouth, Berwick, adult, 20th September (I. & Mrs S. Millar *et al.*).

Devon Lundy, adult, 15th May to 1st June (R. Campey).

Gwynedd Bardsey, juvenile, 1st to 6th October, trapped 2nd (P. J. Roberts, G. M. Tucker).

Norfolk Salthouse and Cley, presumed first-summer, 19th to 27th May (G. E. Dunmore, S. J. Roddis *et al.*) (plate 271).

Scilly St Mary's, juvenile, 6th October to 9th November (C. W. Stone *et al.*) (plate 270); probably same, Tresco, 9th October (Dr L. A. Batten).

Shetland Eshaness, adult, 18th to at least 21st August (G. Carey, P. J. Ewins, J. D. Okill *et al.*). Out Skerries, adult, 19th August to 25th September (I. S. Robertson, E. Tait).

1978 Bedfordshire Caddington, adult, 12th to 23rd November (B. Nightingale, Mrs W. Warren). Possibly same as Buckinghamshire and Hertfordshire individuals of 7th November and 4th December respectively (*Brit. Birds* 72: 540); also considered possibly of captive origin.

(Southeast Europe and southwest Asia) June to September is the most usual period for occurrences of this nomadic starling, thus only the two Shetland records were completely typical.



270 & 271. Rose-coloured Starlings *Sturnus roseus*. Left, juvenile, Scilly, October 1979 (Jeff Pick); above, presumed second-summer, Norfolk, May 1979 (R. Tidman)

Serin *Serinus serinus* (76, 283, 9)

Dorset Portland, ♀, 11th June (R. Ford); ♂, 26th (M. Rogers).

East Sussex Beachy Head, ♂, 5th May (S. M. Starling); 8th October; another, 12th (R. H. Charlwood).

Kent Dungeness, 7th May (S. M. Henson, J. A. Hopper, P. R. Wilcox); 9th May (T. Collins, A. R. Pickup, N. Riddiford). Chilham, 7th October (R. J. F. Carr, A. C. B. Henderson). Cliffsend, ♂, 20th October (D. Beadle, W. G. Harvey).

1961 Kent Dungeness, 2nd to 3rd April (R. E. Scott, D. I. M. Wallace), rejection not previously published, now accepted after review; two, 12th November (G. J. Harris, R. E. Scott), previously rejected (*Brit. Birds* 55: 584), now accepted after review.

1963 Kent Dungeness, 27th July (P. J. Grant, W. H. Gregory, R. E. Scott *et al.*), previously rejected (*Brit. Birds* 57: 280), now accepted after review.

1965 Dorset Portland, 26th October (F. R. Clifton), previously rejected (*Brit. Birds* 59: 304), now accepted after review.

1975 East Sussex Beachy Head, 10th May (M. J. Rogers *et al.*).

1975 Wight Carisbrook, ♂, 3rd to about end of April (R. H. Chittenden, N. Gardner).

1977 East Sussex Beachy Head, 26th April (D. S. Flumm), previously rejected (*Brit. Birds* 71: 530), now accepted after review; ♂, 13th May (R. H. & Mrs M. E. Charlwood); 2nd June (M. J. Rogers), previously rejected (*Brit. Birds* 71: 530), now accepted after review; 10th June (R. H. & Mrs M. E. Charlwood).

1977 Norfolk Wells, ♀, 1st May (S. C. Joyner, N. Williams).

1978 Cornwall Marazion, two ♂♂, 23rd April (*Brit. Birds* 72: 541), first seen 22nd (per D. J. Barker).

1978 Devon Lannacombe, ♂, 24th June (R. M. Belringer, M. R. Edmonds).

1978 East Sussex Beachy Head, 16th October (R. H. & Mrs M. E. Charlwood).

1978 Suffolk Walberswick, 23rd October (M. Smith).

(West, central and southern Europe, Asia Minor and northwest Africa)
A very meagre selection after the encouraging flush of records in 1978: nine is the smallest total since 1971.

Arctic Redpoll *Carduelis hornemanni* (30, 55, 1)

Kent Foreness, 21st December (S. D. W. Mount, D. C. H. Worsfold *et al.*).

(Circumpolar Arctic) A typical date.

Two-barred Crossbill *Loxia leucoptera* (40, 22, 1)

Staffordshire Cannock Chase, ♂, 16th December to at least 16th February 1980 (J. E. Fortey, E. G. Phillips *et al.*).

(Northeast Europe, north-central Asia, northern North America and West Indies) This individual was enjoyed by hundreds of observers during its long stay. Other current records and some from earlier years are under review by the committee in the light of recent research on crossbills (*L. curvirostra* and *L. scotica*) which sometimes show double wingbars.

Parrot Crossbill *Loxia pytyopsittacus* (10, 61, 0)

1962 Shetland Fair Isle, about 33, including two ♂♂, six ♀♀, eight juveniles trapped, 27th September to 10th October; additionally, about 25, including ten ♂♂, nine ♀♀, one juvenile trapped, 11th to 19th; another ♂, 29th (P. Davis *et al.*) (*Bird Migration* 2: 260-264).

1975 Humberside Tophill Low Reservoir, ♀, 23rd October, injured, later died, skin retained by J. R. Mather (per J. R. Mather).

(Northern Europe, from Norway east to Russia and south to Estonia)
These records have not previously been published in these annual reports.

Scarlet Rosefinch *Carpodacus erythrinus* (200, 449, 43)

Devon Lundy, ♀ or immature, 13th September to 7th October (R. Campey *et al.*).

Dorset Portland, ♀ or immature, 13th October (W. E. Oddie *et al.*).

Grampian Drums, near Newburgh, ♀ or immature, 6th October (W. R. Brackenridgc).

Gwynedd Bardsey, three ♀♀ or immatures: trapped, 21st May (K. Brown, P. J. Roberts); trapped, 18th September (P. J. Roberts, W. Thrower, G. M. Tucker); 3rd September to 1st October, trapped 30th (R. Cole, P. J. Roberts).

Humberside Flamborough Head, first-summer ♂, in song, 28th May (P. A. Lassey). Spurn, ♀ or immature, 24th September (N. P. Whitehouse).

Lincolnshire Donna Nook, ♀ or immature, 21st May (S. Lorand).

Norfolk Holme, first-summer ♂, in song, 4th June (P. R. & Mrs M. R. Clarke).

Northumberland Low Hauxley, immature, trapped, 26th August (S. W. Anderson, T. A. Cadwallader, J. Richardson *et al.*). Farne Islands, two ♀♀ or immatures, 7th September (A. E. Dixey, A. R. Taylor).

Orkney St Mary's, Mainland, ♀, 31st May (M. Barlow, S. W. Holmes). North Ronaldsay, six ♀ ♀ or immatures: 22nd to 28th May, trapped, 22nd and 27th (A. D. K. Ramsay, Dr K. F. Woodbridge); trapped, 1st June (J. W. A. Cutt, Dr K. F. Woodbridge); trapped, 13th September; trapped, 22nd September, retrapped 30th; trapped, 23rd September; trapped, 29th September (M. D. Cleaver, Dr K. F. Woodbridge).

Scilly St Mary's, ♀ ♀ or immatures, 23rd September (R. J. B. Jackson, M. J. Brown); 21st October (L. P. Williams). Tresco, ♀ or immature, 27th September (D. van der Elst, J. A. Hopper, R. M. Lafontaine *et al.*).

Shetland Fair Isle, 12 ♀ ♀ or immatures: 21st to 23rd May, trapped 22nd; another 20th; 4th June; 5th to 8th June; 17th to 22nd August; 26th August to 2nd September, trapped 26th; 8th September; 21st to 23rd; two, 26th, one trapped; 30th; 6th October (I. S. Robertson *et al.*). Sumburgh, ♀ or immature, 29th May (J. D. Okill, L. J. D. Percival, M. R. Whiteside); adult ♂, in song, 31st May to 1st June; first-summer ♂, 1st June (G. Carey, J. D. Okill *et al.*); ♀ or immature, 20th to 21st September (I. G. Davison, K. M. Godfrey, J. D. Okill). Quendale, ♀ or immature, 21st May (F. A. Clements). Seafield, Lerwick, ♀ or immature, 29th August (G. Carey, P. J. Ewins, J. D. Okill *et al.*). Fetlar, ♀ or immature, 28th to 30th August (J. N. Dymond, D. J. Montier).

1977 Northumberland Low Hauxley, ♀ or immature, 18th September (*Brit. Birds* 71: 525), ♀ or immature, 25th September (*Brit. Birds* 72: 542); both trapped and aged immature.

1977 Orkney North Ronaldsay, four ♀ ♀ or immatures: trapped, 19th August; trapped, 21st; trapped, 28th (J. & Mrs R. McCutcheon, Dr K. F. Woodbridge); sight, 22nd September (Dr K. F. Woodbridge).

1978 Northumberland Farne Islands, ♀ or immature, 6th September (J. Chester, D. Head, A. Woods).

(East Europe and across Asia, and east Turkey to Himalayas) Also one on Cape Clear Island, Co. Cork, on 17th October. Fifteen in spring is the most ever at that season, while the autumn produced an average series.

Black-and-white Warbler *Mniotilta varia* (1, 4, 0)

1978 Devon Tavistock, 3rd March (Mrs I. McEwen).

(North America) It is conceivable that this individual was that seen in Scilly at the end of September 1977, but it is counted as different. A rather similar occurrence was the first British record of Yellow-rumped Warbler *Dendroica coronata*, inland in Devon, at Newton St Cyres from 4th January to 10th February 1955.

Song Sparrow *Zonotrichia melodia* (0, 4, 1)

Shetland Fair Isle, ♂, 17th April to 7th May (D. Buffery, N. R. Jones, I. S. Robertson *et al.*). Sumburgh, 10th June (G. Bashford, M. S. Chapman *et al.*).

(North America) These two sightings are considered almost certainly to relate to just one individual, the fifth ever and all in spring.

Slate-coloured Junco *Junco hyemalis* (1, 8, 0)

1977 South Yorkshire Near Rotherham, 3rd January (J. Hornbuckle).

(North America) A strange date for this species: the previous eight records have all been in April or May.

Cretzschmar's Bunting *Emberiza caesia* (0, 1, 1)

Shetland Fair Isle, ♂, 9th to 10th June (N. R. Jones, W. E. Oddie, I. S. Robertson *et al.*).

(Southeast Europe and the Middle East) Perhaps the chief prize of the spring; the only previous record was from the same island from 10th to 20th June 1967.

Rustic Bunting *Emberiza rustica* (34, 90, 5)**Borders** St Abb's, Berwickshire, ♂, 7th April (G. F. Bell, J. M. Dickson, P. Wilson *et al.*).**Orkney** North Ronaldsay, juvenile, trapped, 29th September (R. Russell, R. J. Williams, Dr K. F. Woodbridge).**Scilly** St Agnes, ♀ or immature, 10th October (W. Russell, V. R. Tucker *et al.*); possibly same, Bryher, 12th to 13th (G. B. Degg, J. C. Eyre-Dickinson, A. Shaw *et al.*); possibly same, St Mary's, 13th to 19th (M. J. Rogers, P. A. Rolph, L. A. & N. A. Tucker *et al.*); ♂, 14th October (J. F. Cooper, J. B. Whitby, P. J. Wilson *et al.*).**Shetland** Fair Isle, ♂, 11th June (D. Buffery, N. R. Jones, I. S. Robertson *et al.*).**1975 Shetland** Fair Isle, 9th November (*Brit. Birds* 69: 358), 8th November, not as stated.

(Northeast Europe across to north Asia) Five typical records, but the Berwickshire one was unusually early, in fact the earliest ever by two days.

Little Bunting *Emberiza pusilla* (94, 152, 7)**Borders** St Abb's, Berwickshire, 2nd to 4th October, at least one 2nd, two 4th (A. Brown, R. H. Hogg, R. D. Murray *et al.*).**Cornwall** Newquay, 17th October (S. M. Christophers).**Highland** Rosehall, Sutherland, 29th December (P. J. Marsh).**Scilly** St Mary's, 16th to 19th October (R. J. Fairbank, R. B. Hastings, A. V. Moon *et al.*).**Shetland** Fair Isle, 6th to 8th October (D. Buffery, N. R. Jones, I. S. Robertson *et al.*); 13th October (D. Buffery).**1977 Fife** Isle of May, 9th October (*Brit. Birds* 71: 527), was trapped.**1977 Shetland** Out Skerries, 14th to 17th May (D. G. H. Mills, E. Tait); immature, 24th to 29th September (*Brit. Birds* 71: 527), first seen 23rd (E. Tait), trapped, 24th.**1978 Scilly** Tresco, 18th October (D. R. Bishop, R. P. Bosanquet, M. Chown *et al.*).

(Northeast Europe and north Asia) Seven is about the yearly average for this smallest of our buntings. There have been three other midwinter records in recent years, including one in Ross-shire in January 1977.

Yellow-breasted Bunting *Emberiza aureola* (10, 72, 4)**Fife** Fife Ness, ♀ or immature, 29th August (D. L. Clugston).**Shetland** Fair Isle, ♀ ♀ or immatures: 9th September (K. J. Godfrey, I. S. Robertson *et al.*); two, 29th to 30th September, one staying to 1st October (D. Buffery, N. R. Jones, I. S. Robertson *et al.*).**1974 Fife** Isle of May, 1st to 2nd September, another, 2nd September (*Brit. Birds* 68: 332), should read 31st August to 5th September, two 2nd to 5th.

(Northeast Europe across north Asia) A thoroughly typical quartet.

Black-headed Bunting *Emberiza melanocephala* (9, 42, 5)**Essex** West Mersea, ♂, 7th May (T. Bispham, M. A. Cook).**Norfolk** Cley, ♂, 20th April to early May (G. J. White *et al.*).**Scilly** St Agnes, ♂, 15th to at least 26th April, trapped, 17th (Dr J. K. Harte, J. D. Sanders *et al.*). Bryher, ♂, 9th and 11th May (Mrs R. J. Gallop, D. B. Hunt, Mrs J. Webb).**Shetland** Fetlar, ♂, 22nd June to 13th July (A. Bacon, J. N. Dymond, T. Lawrence).**1978 Dorset** Portland, ♂, trapped, 9th May (*Brit. Birds* 72: 544), present 5th to 9th (M. Rogers *et al.*).

(Southeast Europe and southwest Asia) Five is the highest annual total since 1958.

Rose-breasted Grosbeak *Pheucticus ludovicianus* (1, 6, 2)**Scilly** St Mary's, first winter ♂, 12th to at least 29th October (R. Gabb, H. & J. Ransom *et al.*) (plate 272).

272. First-winter male Rose-breasted Grosbeak *Pheucticus ludovicianus*, Scilly, October 1979 (R. Tidman)

(North America) Also an immature female on Cape Clear Island, Co. Cork, on 11th and 12th October, the third Irish record. Of the previous seven, three occurred in Scilly and one on Cape Clear Island.

Bobolink *Dolichonyx oryzivorus* (0, 6, 1)

Scilly St Agnes, 7th October (P. A. Dukes, V. R. Tucker *et al.*).

(North America) Four of the previous six have occurred in Scilly.

Northern Oriole *Icterus galbula* (0, 12, 0)

1958 Devon Lundy, 2nd to 9th October, trapped 2nd (R. H. Dennis, W. B. Workman *et al.*). (*Brit. Birds* 56: 49-52).

(North America) The first of this species in Britain; this record has been omitted in error from previous reports.

Appendix 1. Category D species accepted (see *Brit. Birds* 64: 429)

White Pelican *Pelecanus onocrotalus* (not known, 3, 0)

1972 Kent Dungeness, two adults, 11th to 12th November (D. J. Holman *et al.*).

1975 Kent Fordwich, 11th July (*Brit. Birds* 70: 433), first seen 8th (R. A. Barrett, C. R. Janman).

(Southeast Europe, west and southwest Asia, and Africa) Vagrancy is not impossible; all sightings should be reported, so that any pattern can be assessed.

Baikal Teal *Anas formosa* (6, 4, 0)

1970 Essex Abberton Reservoir, ♂, 28th to 29th November (A. A. Butcher, A. H. Gibson, R. A. Husband).

1973 Dumfries & Galloway Caerlaverock, ♂, 19th February to 7th April (D. J. Britton, P. G. Lansdown, B. Little).

(Central and east Siberia) We hope that the records of the species will be discussed in a forthcoming paper in *British Birds*.

Bald Eagle *Haliaeetus leucocephalus* (0, 1, 0)

1978 Gwynedd Llyn Coron, Anglesey, adult, 17th October (Mr & Mrs J. P. Wilkinson).

(North America) This symbol of the United States of America must have amazed the observers. Genuine vagrancy is considered unlikely, but the escape likelihood is also slight; origin, therefore, remains uncertain, so the species is placed in category D.

Saker *Falco cherrug* (0, 2, 0)

1976 Shetland Out Skerries, 1st to 5th October (D. L. Clugston).

(East-central Europe south to Iran and east to Siberia) This individual precedes another Shetland record for 1978 (*Brit. Birds* 72: 544).

Yellow-shafted Flicker *Colaptes auratus* (0, 1, 0)

(North America) One of ten or more which landed on board RMS *Mauretania* on 7th-8th October 1962, during crossing from New York, USA, to Southampton, Hampshire, survived and was watched flying ashore just inside Cobh Harbour, Co. Cork, at 08.00 GMT on 13th October (*Brit. Birds* 56: 157-164). Known ship-assisted vagrant.

Blue Rock Thrush *Monticola solitarius* (0, 2, 0)

1977 East Sussex Rye, 10th August (*Brit. Birds* 72: 544), observers were D. J. & T. R. Perkins, not as stated.

(Southern Europe, southern Asia and northwest Africa)

Indigo Bunting *Passerina cyanea* (0, 2, 0)**1964 Shetland** Fair Isle, 3rd to 7th August (R. H. Dennis *et al.*).

(North America) This was the first British record of this not uncommon cage-bird; the second was in Essex on 8th September 1973.

Painted Bunting *Passerina ciris* (0, 4, 1)**Shetland** Fair Isle, ♀, 19th to 22nd June (N. R. Jones, I. S. Robertson *et al.*).**1978 Scilly** St Mary's, adult ♂, 25th June (A. W., I. W. & R. W. McPherson).**1978 Shetland** Burrae, Yell, adult ♂, 9th to 27th July, trapped 9th (R. J. Tulloch *et al.*).

(North and Central America) Another common cage-bird which could also occur as a genuine vagrant.

Appendix 2. List of records not accepted

This list contains all current records not accepted after circulation to the committee. It does not include (a) those withdrawn by the observer(s) without circulation, after discussion with the honorary secretary; (b) those which, even if circulated, were not attributed by the observer(s) to any definite species; or (c) those mentioned in the monthly summaries in this journal, if full details were unobtainable. Birds considered to be certain escapes are also omitted.

In the vast majority of cases, the record was not accepted because we were not convinced, on the evidence before us, that the identification was fully established; in only a very few cases were we satisfied that a mistake had been made.

1979

White-billed Diver	Scourie, Highland, 17th April
	Cresswell, Northumberland, 17th June
	Littleferry, Highland, 23rd September
	Spey Bay, Moray, 24th December
Black-browed Albatross	mouth of Kyle of Tongue, Highland, 11th August
	Bigbury Bay, Devon, 23rd August
	near Holme, Norfolk, 28th September
Cory's Shearwater	Staines Reservoirs, Surrey, 21st February
	Selsey Bill, West Sussex, 26th April
	Bardsey, Gwynedd, 23rd August
	Cley, Norfolk, 13th September
	Gibraltar Point, Lincolnshire, two, 13th September
	Horsey Gap, Norfolk, 16th September
Little Shearwater	Lizard, Cornwall, 18th May
	Flamborough Head, Humberside, 3rd June
	Spurn, Humberside, 16th June
Night Heron	Blythburgh, Suffolk, 22nd September
Little Egret	Logierait, Tayside, 18th April
Purple Heron	near Blacktoft, Humberside, 22nd September
	Amersham, Buckinghamshire, 20th October
American Wigeon	Salthouse, Norfolk, 3rd October
	Salthouse, Norfolk, 14th December
Surf Scoter	Flamborough Head, Humberside, two, 21st January
Black Kite	Liverpool, Merseyside, 28th March
	Glen Dye, Grampian, 12th April
	Locality withheld, Moray, 15th April

	Bethesda, Gwynedd, 24th April
	Loch Tummel, Tayside, 7th June
	Skidby, Humberside, 8th July
Pallid Harrier	near York, Humberside, 10th February
Lesser Kestrel	Winchester, Hampshire, 24th January
	Walberswick, Suffolk, 2nd June
Red-footed Falcon	New Forest, Hampshire, 20th May
	Harlow Woods, Essex, 10th June
	New Forest, Hampshire, 26th July
Little Crake	Llanrhidian Marsh, West Glamorgan, 21st March
Crane	Port Talbot, West Glamorgan, two, 24th February
	near Stanstead, Essex, 14th April
Semipalmated Plover	Faxfleet Edge, Humberside, 22nd September
Greater Sand Plover	Rainham, Essex, 21st March
	Pagham Harbour, West Sussex, 4th May
Lesser Golden Plover	near Howden, Humberside, 27th September
	near Howden, Humberside, 10th October
White-rumped Sandpiper	Langstone Harbour, Hampshire, 8th September
Broad-billed Sandpiper	Flamborough Head, 3rd October
Great Snipe	Nosely, Leicestershire, 19th January
Dowitcher sp.	Spurn, Humberside, two, 9th September
	Belvide Reservoir, Staffordshire, 7th November
Marsh Sandpiper	Eldernell Wash, Cambridgeshire, 9th May
Wilson's Phalarope	Abberton Reservoir, Essex, 20th October
Long-tailed Skua	Dungeness, Kent, 5th May
	Fair Isle, Shetland, 6th June
	Winterset Reservoir, West Yorkshire, 7th July
	Flamborough Head, Humberside, 11th July
	Flamborough Head, Humberside, 27th August
	Cley, Norfolk, 1st September
	Gibraltar Point, Lincolnshire, 6th September
	Gibraltar Point, Lincolnshire, 13th September
	Dungeness, Kent, 6th October
Laughing Gull	Taw Estuary, Devon, 17th March
	Two-Tree Island, Essex, 27th November to 1st December
Franklin's Gull	near Holme, Norfolk, 24th December
Bonaparte's Gull	Wanstead Flats, Greater London, 4th to 5th February
	Heacham, Norfolk, 28th December
Slender-billed Gull	Hickling, Norfolk, 6th June
Ring-billed Gull	Lowestoft, Suffolk, 24th February
	Menai Bridge, Gwynedd, 4th to 6th April
	Lee Moor, Devon, 16th July
Ross's Gull	Cresswell, Northumberland, 20th January
Ivory Gull	Bridlington, Humberside, 8th March
Gull-billed Tern	Portland, Dorset, 14th April
Caspian Tern	Bardsey, Gwynedd, three, 27th May
White-winged Black Tern	Portland, Dorset, 2nd October
Yellow-billed Cuckoo	Studland, Dorset, 30th August
Snowy Owl	Chatsworth Park, Derbyshire, 17th January
Hawk Owl	Cley, Norfolk, 18th May
Alpine Swift	Tynninghame, Lothian, 11th September
Short-toed Lark	Southampton, Hampshire, 27th January
Richard's Pipit	Shoreham, West Sussex, 10th to 13th February
	Cley, Norfolk, 8th May
	Strumble Head, Dyfed, 9th September
	East Fleet, Dorset, 30th September
	Landguard Point, Suffolk, 7th October
Tawny Pipit	Gunthorpe, Nottinghamshire, 28th October

Alpine Accentor	Brilley, Hereford & Worcester, about 4th October
Black-eared Wheatear	near Thurso, Highland, 14th April
Eye-browed Thrush	Flamborough Head, Humberside, 18th November
	Loweswater, Cumbria, 23rd October
Black-throated Thrush	Saltfleetby, Lincolnshire, 6th January
	Bangor, Gwynedd, 15th February
Fan-tailed Warbler	Damerham, Hampshire, 28th May
Savi's Warbler	St Leonard's, East Sussex, 10th June
Moustached Warbler	Foreness, Kent, 8th to 9th May
Booted Warbler	Porthgwarra, Cornwall, 20th October
	St Mary's, Scilly, 2nd November
Spectacled Warbler	Saltfleetby, Lincolnshire, 2nd October
Subalpine Warbler	Winterton, Norfolk, 12th May
	South Gare, Cleveland, 26th September
Rüppell's Warbler	near Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire, 12th August
Greenish Warbler	Reay, Highland, 17th May
Arctic Warbler	Farne Islands, Northumberland, 23rd May
	Fair Isle, Shetland, 30th September
Bonelli's Warbler	Theale, Berkshire, 7th May
	Church Norton, West Sussex, 1st September
Coliared Flycatcher	Hemingford Grey, Cambridgeshire, 6th June
Nutcracker	Beachy Head, East Sussex, 21st August
	Llandudno, Gwynedd, two, 14th October
	Milford, Staffordshire, 1st November
	Nottingham, Nottinghamshire, 18th November
Rose-coloured Starling	Angmering, West Sussex, two, 20th May
	Charmouth, Dorset, about 9th July
Serin	Oxford, Oxfordshire, 31st March
Arctic Redpoll	Edale Valley, Derbyshire, 28th January
Scarlet Rosefinch	Out Skerries, Shetland, 8th May
	Dungeness, Kent, 18th October
Little Bunting	Middleton, Gower, West Glamorgan, 12th to 18th February
	Out Skerries, Shetland, 12th May
	Cley, Norfolk, 15th September
Black-headed Bunting	Compton, Hampshire, two, May
	Fair Isle, Shetland, 10th August

1978

Cory's Shearwater	Portland, Dorset, 10th September
	Holme, Norfolk, two, 18th September
Madeira Petrel	Hilbre, Merseyside, 11th September
Black Stork	Fingringhoe, Essex, two, 27th May
American Wigeon	Swithland Reservoir, Leicestershire, 26th November
Surf Scoter	Kinnaird Head, Grampian, two, 17th October
Black Kite	Bradwell, Essex, 2nd October
White-tailed Eagle	Llanfair P. G., Gwynedd, 22nd April
Saker	Braunton Burrows, Devon, 24th December
Crane	Unst, Shetland, 28th September
Lesser Golden Plover	Whitton Sand, Humberside, 16th to 17th September
	Elmley, Kent, 29th October
Baird's Sandpiper	Cley, Norfolk, 15th May
Broad-billed Sandpiper	Rainham, Essex, 9th September
Buff-breasted Sandpiper	Rainham, Essex, 28th June
Greater Yellowlegs	Bantham, Devon, 21st September
	Rattray Head, Grampian, 25th September
Lesser Yellowlegs	Islay, Strathclyde, 29th June
	St Mary's Island, Tyne & Wear, 12th September
Long-tailed Skua	Seaton Sluice, Northumberland, 12th June
	Flamborough Head, Humberside, 15th July

	Kirkwell, Orkney, 2nd August
	Flamborough Head, Humberside, 12th August
	Flamborough Head, Humberside, 28th August
	Flamborough Head, Humberside, 1st September
	Holme, Norfolk, 18th September
Laughing Gull	Bridlington, Humberside, 28th September
Ring-billed Gull	Flamborough Head, Humberside, 10th October
Sooty Tern	Sandwich Bay, Kent, 15th August
Caspian Tern	Winterton, Norfolk, two, 8th August
Bee-eater	Endrick Mouth, Strathclyde, 9th to 11th October
Red-rumped Swallow	Bartley Reservoir, West Midlands, 23rd April
Richard's Pipit	Scaling Dam, Cleveland, 8th January
Pechora Pipit	Out Skerries, Shetland, 23rd September
Black-headed Wagtail	Boldon Flats, Tyne & Wear, 7th May
Siberian Stonechat	St Mary's, Scilly, 22nd October
Eye-browed Thrush	Flamborough Head, Humberside, 13th to 16th October
Savi's Warbler	near Colchester, Essex, 9th June
Greenish Warbler	St Mary's Island, Tyne & Wear, 6th September
Arctic Warbler	Farne Islands, Northumberland, 4th September
Collared Flycatcher	Sanday, Orkney, 22nd June
Serin	Pett Level, East Sussex, 18th May
Rustic Bunting	Out Skerries, Shetland, 1st October
Little Bunting	Hadstone, Northumberland, 16th October
	Dawlish Warren, Devon, 9th December
1977	
Harlequin Duck	Filey Brigg, North Yorkshire, 6th to 10th January
Slender-billed Curlew	Nigg Bay, 16th October (<i>Brit. Birds</i> 71: 529), Ross & Cromarty, Highland, not Grampian as stated
Pallid Swift	Flamborough Head, Humberside, 24th July
	Spurn, Humberside, 22nd October
Pechora Pipit	Farne Islands, Northumberland, 22nd to 26th November
Greenish Warbler	Dungeness, Kent, 16th October
1976	
Long-tailed Skua	Chanonry, Highland, four, 27th September
Alpine Swift	Fetlar, Shetland, 29th May
Richard's Pipit	Pennington Marsh, Hampshire, 21st October
Siberian Stonechat	Fraisthorpe, Humberside, 25th January
Black-headed Bunting	Porthgwarra, Cornwall, 18th September
1975	
Slender-billed Curlew	Poole Harbour, Dorset, 12th to 14th April
1973	
White-winged Black Tern	River Mersey, Liverpool, Merseyside, 26th August
1964	
American Robin	Denholme, West Yorkshire, early August

Mystery photographs



47 It is a murky winter's afternoon, the visibility poor, the landscape reduced to shades of grey. Distantly there appears a skein or two of geese. Their purposeful flight shows that they are not going to land conveniently to be identified. It has got to be done in the short time before they disappear back into the gloom. The first choice is between black and grey geese. Of the former, the Brent Goose *Branta bernicla* is rather like a large duck, but with a very short neck and narrow wings. Barnacle Geese *B. leucopsis* are longer in the neck and wing, but even at great distances the contrast between the black neck and chest and the grey-white underparts should stand out, perhaps also the white face patch. The latter is also present on the much larger Canada Goose *B. canadensis*, but this species' very long, very dark neck is unmistakable.

So, they are grey geese in the photographs (the left one by Brian Gadsby, the right by the Wildfowl Trust). But can one identify the geese specifically before they vanish? The answer, judging by the many entries of 'grey goose sp.' in county bird reports, is no. Perhaps the observers, and certainly the report editors, are right to be cautious, at least in areas away from regular goose haunts. There are, however, some clues to the identification of grey geese in flight that may be helpful. The points to concentrate on are head shape, neck length, and wing shape and length, and, if possible, the relative proportions of neck, wing and body length.

GREYLAG GOOSE *Anser anser* Noticeably large headed, the heavy bill contributing to this. Although neck is quite thick, there is a marked narrowing just behind the head. The wings are broad, especially close to the body.

PINK-FOOTED GOOSE *A. brachyrhynchus* Small rounded head (because of the short, stubby, bill) on a short neck. There is only a slight narrowing behind the head, which is therefore much less prominent than the Greylag's. The wings, too, are relatively short.

WHITE-FRONTED GOOSE *A. albifrons* The head is not particularly prominent, as it tapers back into the fairly short neck. The wings are particularly long and narrow, in both European and Greenland races. Each wing, from root to tip, is approximately the same length as the body from bill tip to tail, whereas on the Greylag and the Pinkfoot it is perhaps 20% shorter. This means that the wingspan of the Greylag and Pinkfoot is about twice the body length, but that of the Whitefront a good bit more than twice.

BEAN GOOSE *A. fabalis* The head is elongated, thanks to the long bill, and the neck is also longer in proportion to the body than on any of the other species. The wings are closer in shape to the Whitefront's, being long and fairly narrow, but, because of the longer neck, the ratio of wing length to body length is nearer to that of the Greylag and Pinkfoot.

The way that the geese are flying is of doubtful value. Greylags seem to move rather heavily, Pinkfeet, Whitefronts and Beans are lighter and more buoyant, but that, and whether they are in V-formation or bunched, is affected by wind and weather, and by how far the birds are thinking of going.

Finally, there are, of course, two species shown in the photographs. Those in plate 239, and now shown on the right, have large prominent heads and broad-based wings, and are Greylags. Those in plate 238, and now shown on the left, have much smaller, rounded heads, and conspicuously short necks, and are Pinkfeet. How convenient of them to fly past together and so allow comparisons to be made! M. A. OGILVIE



273. Mystery photograph 48. Name the species. Answer next month

Notes

Golden Eagle killing Buzzard On 18th August 1977, on the shores of Loch Ailort, Highland, my family and I heard the repeated calls of a Buzzard *Buteo buteo* and, looking up, saw a pair of adult Golden Eagles *Aquila chrysaetos* circling at about 250m and being mobbed by two Buzzards. Continuing to circle, the four raptors drifted slowly eastwards, until suddenly an eagle caught one of the Buzzards and dropped with it almost vertically on to the bare hillside. The two appeared just to fly into each other with no sudden turns or bursts of speed. Although we could not see them directly on the ground, we noted their approximate position. The surviving Buzzard continued calling, but soon soared out of sight, while the other eagle landed on the hillside farther down the loch for a few minutes, before flying inland. We did not see the first eagle leave, but it



had gone by the time we reached the Buzzard's corpse about an hour later. The latter was lying on its front in the grass at the base of a large rock; its neck had been broken, the top of the skull had been opened and the brain eaten; apart from a few loose feathers, the rest of the corpse was apparently undamaged. As no scavenging birds were seen in the area, it is likely that the eagle had eaten the brain.

The eagle's surprising behaviour appears to be extremely unusual, but a similar case, in which a Golden Eagle made a rapid turn to capture a Red-shouldered Hawk *B. lineatus* which had been pestering it, has been reported from the USA (*Auk* 64: 317-318).

D. M. TODD

Glaston Hill House, Eversley, Hampshire

Not only is the eagle's killing of the Buzzard unusual, but also the fact that it ate its victim's brain rather than the muscle or viscera. EDS

Iceland Gull attempting to catch snowflakes On 11th February 1978, at Coatham Marsh, Cleveland, I watched a first-winter Iceland Gull *Larus glaucoides* standing on a recently frozen lake and scraping at the snow-covered ice with its bill. During a sudden heavy snow storm, it snapped at overhead snowflakes at least 20 times in quick succession. This recalls behaviour published concerning the Herring Gull *L. argentatus* (*Brit. Birds* 71: 80), but none of the 400 standing with the Iceland Gull was seen to behave similarly.

DAVID BRITTON

44 Kirkleatham Avenue, Marske, Cleveland

Starlings hawking snowflakes The note on Herring Gulls *Larus argentatus* attempting to catch snowflakes (*Brit. Birds* 71: 80) reminded me of the following. On 14th April 1966, at Neston, Wiltshire, during a snowfall, I watched about 15 Starlings *Sturnus vulgaris* hawking snowflakes, catching them in the same manner as they used for catching winged insects. Within a few minutes they lost interest.

JULIAN C. ROLLS

Sparrows Cottage, 12 Wadswick Lane, Neston, Corsham, Wiltshire SN13 9SZ

Starlings, Rooks and Magpie hawking snowflakes I. S. Robertson's note (*Brit. Birds* 73: 35) concerning immature Herring Gulls *Larus argentatus* picking up ice reminds us of—and may help to explain—one of our own observations, during the first real, heavy fall of snow (in about 1973), after a succession of totally snow-free years in this part of the country.

Big, soft snowflakes began to fall quite suddenly, and for a short time many birds were observed 'fly-catching' them. Starlings *Sturnus vulgaris* and Rooks *Corvus frugilegus* performed in this manner briefly, but one Magpie *Pica pica*—in spite of its great awkwardness—continued to do so over our garden for several minutes.

COLIN CAMPBELL and BRIGID CAMPBELL

120 Coniston Road, Basingstoke, Hampshire RG22 5HZ

It should be noted that this and the preceding note concern aerial hawking of snowflakes by passerines; those relating to gulls (*Brit. Birds* 71: 80 and above) both concerned snapping at the flakes by standing individuals. EDS

Chaffinch using old nest of Blackbirds The notes on Robins *Erithacus rubecula* using old nests of Blackbirds *Turdus merula* (*Brit. Birds* 69: 452; 71: 131) recalled the following. On 22nd May 1977, near Cork, I found, on top of a tree stump covered with ivy *Hedera helix*, the shell of a Blackbirds' nest; built inside it was a complete nest of a Chaffinch *Fringilla coelebs* containing four newly hatched young. The female Chaffinch was brooding the young, and was again on the nest on 23rd May, but the nest was empty on 27th. Bruce Campbell and James Ferguson-Lees (1974, *A Field Guide to Birds' Nests*) cited only one record of such an occurrence.

JOHN A. COVENEY

Bishopstown House, Waterfall Road, near Cork, Ireland

Call-note of Serin The note by D. W. Taylor (*Brit. Birds* 71: 39) prompts me to record the following. During 1978, a pair of Serins *Serinus serinus* bred in south Devon, successfully rearing two broods. Fledglings from the first brood gave food-begging calls and also flight notes identical to the calls of both adults: a fairly high-pitched 'prrrp', most often disyllabic (the 'tirrilillit' note often referred to in the literature).

All the fledglings from the second brood, however, from the time they had just fledged (on 1st September) until they were quite independent of their parents during the last week of September, and even until early October when they were last seen, were never heard to give this call, or anything like it. Instead, 'zeee', 'zeeez' and 'ziz' notes were given, either separately or combined; particularly when they excitedly followed a parent, they called 'zeeez-zeeez, ziz-ziz-zeee'. These notes sounded to me like those of fledgling Spotted Flycatchers *Muscicapa striata*.

Although I heard the parents call hundreds of times between May and the end of September, never once did their notes vary; nor did those of the first-brood fledglings.

V. R. TUCKER

Periglis, 4 Clovelly View, Turnchapel, Plymouth

Letter

Another mystery photograph: Moustached or Sedge Warbler? In reply to the query over the identification of my photograph of the Moustached Warbler *Acrocephalus melanopogon* (*Brit. Birds* 73: 367-370), I should like to describe how my wife and I came to identify the species.

We were photographing in the Marchegg Reserve, Austria, where both Sedge *A. schoenobaenus* and Moustached Warblers were nesting. This pair we first identified by the quite characteristic song, noticeably different from the Sedge Warbler, including phrases resembling Nightingale *Luscinia megarhynchos*. We watched this pair, which was obviously different in appearance from the local Sedge Warblers, for some time, eventually tracing it back to the nest.

The nest itself was built in sedge and a few reeds, just above the wet boggy ground. In my experience, Sedge Warblers almost invariably—as they also did in this reserve—build in more varied vegetation and generally on drier ground.

With regard to the print, it would be quite simple to produce a much

darker print showing darker markings on head and wings, as can be seen by the all-over darker print by C. C. Doncaster. Unfortunately, both prints are very badly reproduced in *British Birds*. The reproduction of my print has concentrated on the highlights and shows no gradation.

I consider it impossible to be certain about the wing:tail ratio measurements from a monochrome print, as no adjustment or account can be made for the foreshortening due to viewpoint plus a 135mm telephoto lens.

KEVIN CARLSON

Path Cottage, Hickling, Norwich NR12 0YJ

The eight essential bird books recommended by 'British Birds'

So many bird books are now published that even professional ornithologists cannot keep track of them all; how much more difficult must it be for the spare-time birdwatcher. Our list of books in 'Christmas bookshop' (*Brit. Birds* 70: 488-494) was so praised by readers as a useful service-feature, that we now supply another list. This time we have chosen those eight books which we consider *every* British birdwatcher must have if he can possibly find the money to purchase them. Some are out of print and difficult to obtain, but are worth the effort.

Here, then, is our choice (in alphabetical order by authors):

- A Field Guide to Birds' Nests.** By **Bruce Campbell** and **James Ferguson-Lees**. Constable, London, 1972. Out of print.
- Handbook of the Birds of Europe, the Middle East and North Africa. The Birds of the Western Palearctic.** Edited by **Stanley Cramp**, **K. E. L. Simmons** *et al.* 2 volumes (5 volumes still to be published). Oxford University Press, 1977 & 1980. £30.00 per volume.
- The Birds of Britain and Europe with North Africa and the Middle East.** By **Hermann Heinzel**, **Richard Fitter** and **John Parslow**. Collins, London, 1972. £3.25.
- The Popular Handbook of Rarer British Birds.** By **P. A. D. Hollom**. H. F. & G. Witherby, London, 1960. (Revised edition in preparation)
- A New Dictionary of Birds.** By **A. Landsborough Thomson**. Nelson, London & Edinburgh, 1964. Out of print. (Revised edition in preparation)
- A Field Guide to the Birds of Britain and Europe.** By **Roger Peterson**, **Guy Mountfort** and **P. A. D. Hollom**. Collins, London, 1974. £5.50.
- The Atlas of Breeding Birds in Britain and Ireland.** By **J. T. R. Sharrock**. T. & A. D. Poyser, Berkhamsted, 1976. £13.00.
- The Handbook of British Birds.** By **H. F. Witherby**, **F. C. R. Jourdain**, **N. F. Ticehurst** and **B. W. Tucker**. 5 volumes. H. F. & G. Witherby, London, 1938-41. Out of print. (Or, alternatively, until you can find a set of 'The Handbook', *The Popular Handbook of British Birds*. By **P. A. D. Hollom**. H. F. & G. Witherby, London, 1962. £9.50.)

Fifty years ago . . .

'This spring there was an extremely large passage movement at the Cambridge Sewage Farm and twenty-one species of waders were seen. Last autumn twenty-two were seen, the only other occasion of which I know when over twenty species have occurred at an inland locality during one migration.' DAVID A. LACK

The first part in an impending saga: 'The female Reed-Bunting was brooding the young and left the nest on the arrival of the male. After feeding the young and cleaning the nest, he immediately took up a position on the brim of the nest with his back to the sun. At first the spread of his wings was not very great, but this increased as the heat got more powerful.' J. H. OWEN

'On August 29th, 1930, a Buzzard (*Buteo b. buteo*) forced its way through a pane of glass in the side of a greenhouse adjoining my house. From there it made its way through an open doorway into a corridor of the house, where I found it perched. I opened a door leading into the garden, but the bird, in its alarm, flew through the greenhouse, and, smashing another pane of glass close to where it had entered, made its escape.' R. O. JOURDAIN (*Brit. Birds* 24: 145, 159 & 162, November 1930)

Announcements

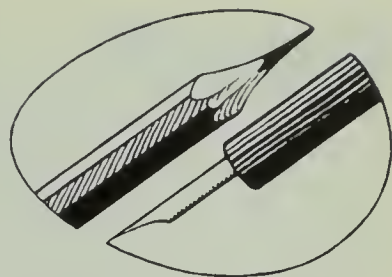
Birdwatcher's Yearbook 1981 Edited by John E. Pemberton. Full of useful information. Everybody will want one. You will help *BB*'s finances if you order yours from us. Send cheque (payable to British Birds Ltd) for £5.45 (£4.95 + 50p p&p) to Birdwatcher's Yearbook, Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3NJ.

Postal auction of cover design Usual arrangements (see *Brit. Birds* 73: 485).

The 'British Birds' List of Birds of the Western Palearctic Complete list of the birds of Europe, North Africa and the Middle East arranged in the modern Voous sequence, with English vernacular and scientific names. Categories within the British and Irish List are indicated; status in Britain and Ireland is classified by five code-letters; and an indication is given of the number of pairs breeding in Britain and Ireland. Published in 1978 (iii + 24 pages). Limited number now available at 50p each (including postage) from Mrs Erika Sharrock, Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3NJ.

Gift subscriptions Why not give a *BB* subscription to a friend as a Christmas or birthday present? You may subscribe in this way for the same price as your own subscription (not YOC rate). We will send a special printed gift card to the potential recipient, telling him/her the date of commencement of the subscription and that it is a gift from you. Write to Mrs E. M. Sharrock, Gift Subscriptions, Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3NJ.

'Bird Illustrator of the Year' and 'The Richard Richardson Award'



We are delighted to announce that the Society of Wildlife Artists has agreed that in 1981 the entries of the four prize-winners of these two competitions will be displayed at their annual exhibition at The Mall Galleries. The award presentation and press reception, at which a selection of 30 or 40 entries is displayed, will also be held at The Mall Galleries, on the morning of the Society of Wildlife Artists' exhibition preview, which will be in late July or early August.

Will artists please note that the closing date for entries in these competitions will be earlier than in past years: 31st March 1981.

Binding 'British Birds' The monthly issues of *British Birds* can be stored for future reference by either loose-leaf binders (see Easibind Ltd address below) or by a standard permanent binding (see P. G. Chapman & Co. Ltd address below). In both cases, a complete year's issues and index can be held as one volume, for easy reference. Both forms of binding have the title and *British Birds'* Red Grouse logo on the spine.

Loose-leaf binders can be purchased now, price £3.65 each (25p extra if overseas) from EASIBIND LTD, Eardley House, 4 Uxbridge Street, Kensington, London W8 7sz.

For permanent binding, a year's 12 issues plus index, together with cheque/PO for £6.00, should be sent to P. G. CHAPMAN & Co. LTD, Kent House Lane, Beckenham, Kent BR3 1LD

Photographic prints Since 1976, it has been standard practice to return black-and-white prints to photographers immediately after publication in *BB*. Now, (1) to make our reference files as comprehensive as possible, (2) to save administrative time and (3) to save postage, such prints will be retained in the *BB* office, unless the photographer specifically indicates (on the back of the print) that he/she wishes it to be returned after use.

R. J. CHANDLER and DON SMITH

Bill Oddie's Little Black Bird Book The Bill Oddie of the BBC-TV's 'The Goodies' is also the W. E. Oddie who appears regularly in the notes and rarities report sections of *BB*. If you can be somewhat broad-minded at times and are willing to laugh at yourself and at other birdwatchers, this book will give you hours of hilarious entertainment. There are some serious (and helpful) bits, but mostly it is a series of guffaws interspersed by bouts of hysteria. Just the thing for Christmas . . .

If you order a copy from *BB*, we will get a small percentage and the publishers (Eyre Methuen Ltd) will send you a copy post free. Send cheque or postal order for £4.95 (made payable to British Birds Ltd) to Bill Oddie's Book, Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3NJ.

Requests

Seabird biology The Seabird Group is seeking manuscripts (up to 5,000 words) on any aspect of seabird biology for its 1976-80 report, due to be published in 1981. Details of requirements may be obtained from P. G. H. Evans, Edward Grey Institute, South Parks Road, Oxford OX1 3PS, or Dr T. R. Birkhead, Zoology Department, The University, Sheffield S10 2TN.

News and comment

Peter Conder and Mike Everett

William T. Keeton We are very sad to hear of the recent death of Professor W. T. Keeton. This is a tragic loss to the science of ornithology: his masterful summary of current knowledge of bird navigation and orientation (*Brit. Birds* 72: 451-470) was but one example of his great contribution, based on his internationally recognised long-term studies at Cornell University, New York. In over 20 years at the University, he gained pre-eminence as a teacher as well as a researcher and was clearly admired and regarded with great affection by colleagues and pupils alike: to all of them and to his wife and family we extend our deepest sympathies.

Commons bird While habitat destruction continues apace, as often as not 'in the public interest', it is nice to know that somebody, somewhere, cares . . . *The House of Commons Notices of Questions and Motions* for 22nd July 1980 included the following over the names of six MPs: 'That this House congratulates the Dartford Warbler on its ability to survive despite the efforts of the Forestry Commission to the contrary.'

Film-star birds A good misprint we noticed recently was 'Lana Falcon'—almost as nice, we thought, as *Phalacrocorax garbo*.

Swan round-up In the early morning of 8th August 1980, a team of 50 people assembled at Abbotsbury, Dorset, led by Chris Perrins of the EGI and Malcolm Ogilvie of the Wildfowl Trust. With the permission of the owners, they rounded up the flock of flightless, moulting Mute Swans *Cygnus olor*. This latest effort in the long-term study of these colonially nesting swans led to a catch of 830. Within three hours, using

specialty-built pens, the skilled team had released the last one back onto the water. By then, the majority had been ringed, or had their existing ring numbers read; blood samples had been taken from 200 as part of a programme of monitoring for the presence of lead; and a good sample of measurements and weights had been obtained. Record-breaking was not on the agenda—but this seems to have been the largest-ever Mute Swan catch and was certainly the heaviest-ever British bird catch: the weighed samples indicated a total weight of 7.5 tonnes. (Contributed by MAO)

New recorder for the London area Pete Clement, 9 Headley, King Charles Road, Surbiton, Surrey, has now taken over from K. C. Osborne as recorder for the London area.

Wader studies One of the useful publications which regularly appears through the editorial letterbox is the *Wader Study Group Bulletin*, of which no. 29 (August 1980) has just arrived. Crammed with news and tips, as well as papers on original work (mostly relating to ringing or in-the-hand studies) this duplicated bulletin is sent three times a year to members of the Wader Study Group. The current subscription is £5 or \$12.50 and membership forms are available from Graham F. Appleton, 18 Old Barn Road, Bourneville, Birmingham B31 1PY, or Dr Edward H. Miller, Dept of Biology, York University, Faculty of Science, 4700 Keele Street, Downsview, Ontario, Canada M3J 1P3. (Contributed by JFRS)

ICBP move *BB* readers should note that the International Council for Bird Preservation has moved its HQ to 219c Huntingdon Road, Cambridge CB3 0DL, where it shares

accommodation with the Species Conservation Monitoring Unit of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN). The new Director is Dr Christoph Imboden.

Congratulations . . . to Geoff Pyman on being created an OBE in the Queen's Birthday Honours. He needs no introduction to Essex birders; he also did a valuable stint as secretary of the Rarities Committee some years ago. (By the way, we have assumed that the *Daily Telegraph's* recent mention of 'St Peter Scott' was a misprint . . .)

'Aves' goes American It has been announced that, from vol. 115 onwards (vol. 114 is due to appear in 1981), *The Zoological Record* is to be produced by 'Biosis' (Biosciences Information Service, 2100 Arch Street, Philadelphia, Pa, USA). It seems a pity to us that the Zoological Society of London should have lost the world's leading zoological bibliography after so many years of producing such an immensely useful and high-quality compilation. Let us hope that the 'Aves' section continues to be of a high standard and that we shall not see too much of an American bias in its listings . . .



274. BIRD ILLUSTRATOR OF THE YEAR Presentation by Robert Gillmor (left) of inscribed salver and cheque to Norman Arlott (*Don Smith*)

Gillmor stamps The Summer Isles postal service provides the only postal link between the islands and the Scottish mainland, charging postage for the daily two-mile crossing, plus conventional postage for onward transmission. To celebrate the tenth anniversary of the Summer Isles Post Office, its Philatelic Bureau (Wester Ross IV26 2YG) has produced a superb definitive set of stamps with probably the best bird pictures on stamps that we have ever seen, by Robert Gillmor: Arctic Tern 3p, Red-breasted Mergansers 5p, Gannets 10p, Barnacle Geese 15p, Heron 20p and Golden Eagle 50p. Mint sets are available for 78p, sets on first-day covers for £1.20 (or £2.25, signed by RG), plus 25p p & p in each case.

Artists at Press Reception The exhibition of entries for the 1980 Bird Illustrator of the Year and The Richard Richardson Award was held at the Little Essex Street offices of Macmillan Journals Ltd on 28th August. The prizes were presented by Robert Gillmor (see plate 274). There is an important announcement concerning the 1981 competitions on page 541.

Ennion exhibition Watercolour drawings by Dr Eric Ennion will be on exhibition at The William Marler Gallery, 17 Bull Ring, Ludlow, Shropshire, from 22nd November to 24th December.

Opinions expressed in this feature are not necessarily those of the editors of British Birds

Recent reports

R. A. Hume and K. Allsopp



Unless stated otherwise, all dates refer to August.

The weather during the first half of the month was unsettled, with predominantly warm southwesterly winds and some very wet days. From 16th, anticyclones began to dominate the weather patterns. One centred to the west brought a cooler northwesterly flow with fine weather until 24th, after which another centred over western Europe brought three days of warmer easterlies. Westerlies returned at the end of the month.

Seabirds

Good as the month was for many species, it will be remembered as one of the most remarkable ever for seabirds off British and Irish coasts. Reports of **Cory's Shearwaters** *Calonectris diomedea* began as exceptional and soon became scarcely credible as all previous records were shattered. Movements began off southern Ireland on 26th July and off Porthgwarra (Cornwall) next day. Cape Clear Island (Cork), traditional centre for large numbers of this species, had up to 320 a day in late July and there were 153 at Porthgwarra on 27th July—already remarkable numbers. Then, off Dursey Island (Cork) in early August, up to 330 per day were recorded; 167 passed Porthgwarra on 6th, then 483 there and 117 off Cape Clear on 11th. On 12th, a phenomenal 1,400 passed Porthgwarra, but only five at Cape Clear—but the Irish observatory then produced 2,607 on 13th. Up to 220 per day were seen off Porthgwarra between 15th and 17th, but on 16th at Cape Clear there was an incredible count of 10,939! The big year of 1968 produced a total of 380 birds of which 374 were at Cape Clear Island in one day, numbers which now seem tame by comparison. Away from these three major stations, others were noted between 31st July and 17th at Benacre (Suffolk), St Ives (Cornwall) (up to 13), Bardsey Island (Gwynedd) and Walney Island (Cumbria). Meanwhile, **Great Shearwaters** *Puffinus gravis* were very much fewer, with 39 at Porthgwarra on 27th and a few on other dates, 250 at Cape Clear on 16th and five or fewer at St Ives, Filey Brigg (North Yorkshire), Fair Isle (Shetland)—where seawatching was poor all

month—and Strumble Head (Dyfed). By mid September, however, numbers were considerably greater, in the west at least. **Sooty Shearwaters** *P. griseus* were associated only weakly with these movements, with small numbers at Porthgwarra and St Ives, up to five at Dungeness (Kent) and 33 at Filey Brigg on 23rd.

Pomarine Skuas *Stercorarius pomarinus* were noted in small numbers at several places, with 14 at Cape Clear Island on 13th, up to three at Filey Brigg, odd ones off north Norfolk and five at Flamborough Head (Humberside) on 23rd. Bardsey Island had several in early September. **Long-tailed Skuas** *S. longicaudus* were scarce, with one at Porthgwarra on 11th, two at Flamborough and two at Redcar (Cleveland) on 23rd, but **Arctic Skuas** *S. parasiticus* were frequent off Norfolk coasts and some other eastern localities, with Filey Brigg being passed by 167 on 21st, 188 on 23rd and 623 on 30th.

A **Laughing Gull** *Larus atricilla* was reported at Marazion (Cornwall) on 21st. **Black Terns** *Chlidonias niger* were in good numbers, with 75 at Abberton Reservoir (Essex) on 10th, 400 at Foulness Island (Essex) on 17th and 154 at Dungeness (Kent) on 29th. Those at Foulness were accompanied by a **White-winged Black Tern** *C. leucopterus* and others turned up at Point of Ayr (Clwyd), where there were three on 26th July, Hanningfield Reservoir (Essex) on 2nd and 3rd, Abberton on 4th and 5th, at Chichester (West Sussex) and Teesmouth (Cleveland) on 16th and at Theale (Berkshire) on 7th September. **Gull-billed Terns** *Gelochelidon nilotica* were reported from Marazion on 21st and Barn Elms Reservoir (London) on 26th.

Wading birds and wildfowl

Spoonbills *Platalea leucorodia* occurred at Blithfield Reservoir (Stafford) (two), Attenborough Gravel-pits (Nottingham) (two from 8th to 13th), and at Minsmere (Suffolk) (up to three). A **Black Stork** *Ciconia nigra* was near Perth from 26th to 29th. At Slimbridge (Gloucestershire) a **Crane** *Grus grus* was reported on 30th. Wildfowl included the inevitable **Ring-necked Duck** *Aythya collaris*, in Nottinghamshire on about 3rd, and an

interesting apparent influx of **Ruddy Shelducks** *Tadorna ferruginea*, with one at Minsmere on 3rd, one at Sandwich Bay (Kent) on 16th, increasing to five by 26th, two at Old Hall Marshes (Essex) on 25th and then a concentration variously reported as 13 or 18 in the area of the Wash (Norfolk/Lincoln) in early September. One further report is tainted by claims of another, similar ornamental species being involved.

Birds of prey

At Inchinnan (Strathclyde), a pale-phase **Eleonora's Falcon** *Falco eleonora* was claimed on 18th. **Black Kites** *Milvus migrans* appeared at Worthing (West Sussex) on 12th, in the New Forest (Hampshire) on 13th and at Pagham (West Sussex) on about 15th and some claims were made from several Norfolk sites at the end of the month. A very early **Rough-legged Buzzard** *Buteo lagopus* was reported at Walberswick (Suffolk) on 13th.

Waders

A **Kentish Plover** *Charadrius alexandrinus* was at Sandwich Bay on 23rd. **Temminck's Stints** *Calidris temminckii* appeared from 3rd from Hayle (Cornwall) in the southwest to Cliffe (Kent) and Sandwich Bay in the east to Fair Isle in the north, and both **Wood Sandpipers** *Tringa glareola*—with several in eastern Ireland, 11 at Walney Island and up to a dozen at Cley (Norfolk)—and **Curlew Sandpipers** *C. ferruginea*—up to 27 at Cley—made a good showing. **Common Sandpipers** *Actitis hypoleucos* really were common, with numbers such as 185 at Abberton Reservoir on 10th and high concentrations in more inland places. From America, several species came in August as a prelude to even better things in September—**dowitchers** *Limnodromus* at Old Hall Marshes on 24th, Minsmere on 25th and Hayle on 28th, **Wilson's Phalaropes** *Phalaropus tricolor* at Ballycotton (Cork) on 15th, Stithians

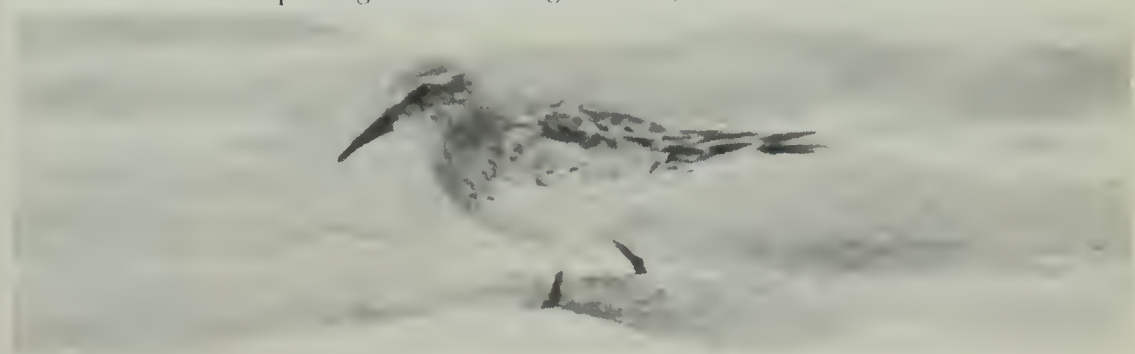
Reservoir (Cornwall) on 23rd and at Levington (Suffolk) on 31st and **Buff-breasted Sandpipers** *Tryngites subruficollis* at Blithfield Reservoir on 7th September and both Bardsey Island and in Scilly in early September too. **Pectoral Sandpipers** *C. melanotos* were few, but **White-rumped Sandpipers** *C. fuscicollis* were noted at Cley all month (with two at first), Musselburgh (Lothian) from 6th to 8th (see plate 275), at Cliffe from 3rd to 9th, Tacumshin (Co. Wexford) on 17th and on Tees-side and at Hickling Broad (Norfolk) at the end of the month. A **Baird's Sandpiper** *C. bairdii* was reported in Cornwall from 31st. At Drift (Cornwall), a **Lesser Yellowlegs** *T. flavipes* from 17th was joined by a **Solitary Sandpiper** *T. solitaria* on 28th.

Near-passerine and passerine migrants

Hoopoes *Upupa epops* occurred at a few places in the southeast. An **Alpine Swift** *Apus melba* was over Dursey Island on 26th July. In Cornwall, a **Belted Kingfisher** *Ceryle alcyon* at Hayle was presumed to be the bird from the previous winter a little farther east. **Wrynecks** *Jynx torquilla* predictably turned up in the east, with three on Fair Isle on 30th, four at Weybourne (Norfolk) in early September and smaller numbers around the same period at Hull (Humber-side), Dungeness, Cley and Blakeney (Norfolk). **Woodchat Shrikes** *Lanius senator* were at Porthgwarra on 6th, at St Ives from 4th to 7th, Portland Bill (Dorset) on 7th and 21st, Cape Clear Island on 15th, Fair Isle on 25th and 26th and in Scilly on 5th September and subsequent dates. **Tawny Pipits** *Anthus campestris* appeared at Portland, Aberlady (Lothian) on 25th July and at Rustington (West Sussex) early in September. Fair Isle had a **Short-toed Lark** *Calandrella brachydactyla* on 18th.

Icterine Warblers *Hippolais icterina*, though always subject to wishful identifica-

275. Adult White-rumped Sandpiper *Calidris fuscicollis* moulting from summer to winter plumage, Lothian, August 1980 (S. R. D. da Prato)



tions which may exaggerate the pattern a little, occurred on cue from 2nd (at Sizewell in Suffolk), with the main influx around 25th and 27th in Norfolk, Tees-side and on Fair Isle (up to three) with a few in Suffolk and Kent. **Melodious Warblers** *H. polyglotta* were earlier with two or three on Bardsey between 4th and 16th, one at Portland on 9th, up to three on Cape Clear Island from 9th, and two at Prawle Point (Devon) and one on Walney Island on 10th. A **Booted Warbler** *H. caligata* was claimed at Landguard Point (Suffolk) on 17th. Several **Aquatic Warblers** *Acrocephalus paludicola* appeared—after one at Sandwich Bay on 9th, most were between 24th and 30th, with ones and twos at Marazion and up to four at Lodmoor (Dorset). Fair Isle recorded its best late August passage for many years and this was reflected in numbers of **Willow Warblers** *Phylloscopus trochilus* including 350 on 30th; Dungeness had 250 on 19th, but Sandwich Bay reported few. **Lesser White-throats** *Sylvia curruca* peaked at 100 at Dungeness on 23rd and 60 at Sandwich on 25th. The Fair Isle passage also included 80 **Whinchats** *Saxicola rubetra* on 30th and

September from Holme (Norfolk), Walney Island, Landguard Point and Weybourne. The last locality also provided reports of a **Sardinian Warbler** *S. melanocephala*, but scores of observers between 2nd and 7th September failed to see the little skulker. A **Bonelli's Warbler** *P. bonelli* was reported at Nacton (Suffolk) on 20th and even more unusual, considering the very early date, was a claimed **Dusky Warbler** *P. fuscatus* at Bamburgh (Northumberland) on 18th. A **Rufous Bush Robin** *Cercotrichas galactotes* unfortunately eluded its gathering fans at Prawle Point after it was first seen on 9th. **Bluethroats** *Luscinia svecica* were nearly as difficult at Blakeney on 1st September and Stiffkey (Norfolk) the next day. A **Firecrest** *Regulus ignicapillus* at Dungeness on 26th was the earliest ever there. At Portland, up to three **Ortolan Buntings** *Emberiza hortulana* occurred between 26th and 30th—they are very difficult to find anywhere else these days it seems—while, on Fair Isle, a **Yellow-breasted Bunting** *E. aureola* was logged on 27th and 28th, and two appeared on 30th and 31st. Fair Isle also has the last word, with **Scarlet Rosefinches** *Carpodacus erythrinus* occurring regularly in late August in twos and threes.

Latest news

During 12th-20th October: **Booted Warbler** in Scilly, **Olive-backed Pipit** *Anthus hodgsoni* at Saltfleetby (Lincolnshire) and **Arctic Redpolls** *Carduelis hornemanni* on 13th on Fetlar (Shetland) (2) and North Ronaldsay (Orkney), but Fair Isle was the place to be, with **Brünnich's Guillemot** *Uria lomvia*, three eastern **Stonechats** *Saxicola torquata*, **Pine Bunting** *Emberiza leucocephalos* and **Yellow-browed Bunting** *E. chrysophrys*.



Barred Warblers *S. nisoria* from 18th with a peak of seven on 30th. Barred Warblers were also recorded late in the month and in early

Review

Bill Oddie's Little Black Bird Book. By Bill Oddie. Eyre Methuen, London, 1980. 150 pages; a few black-and-white plates and line-drawings. £4.95.

This is the funniest book about birdwatching and birdwatchers that I have ever read. It has no pretensions to be great literature, but is almost un-put-down-able once you climb into its irreverent mood (preferably, read it with or to a fellow birdwatcher: what *you* don't find funny, *he* will, and you will—in consequence—waste twice as much time that ought to be spent actually looking at birds). To give just one example: Bill Oddie asks whether you are a 'twitcher', a 'birder' or a 'dude'. To find out, 'place the following in order of importance: (a) Food (b) World peace (c) a Lanceolated Warbler'.

Whichever you are, you should enjoy this look at the twitching and birdwatching scene. It isn't tongue-in-cheek, it is blatantly tongue-sticking-right-out.

J. T. R. SHARROCK

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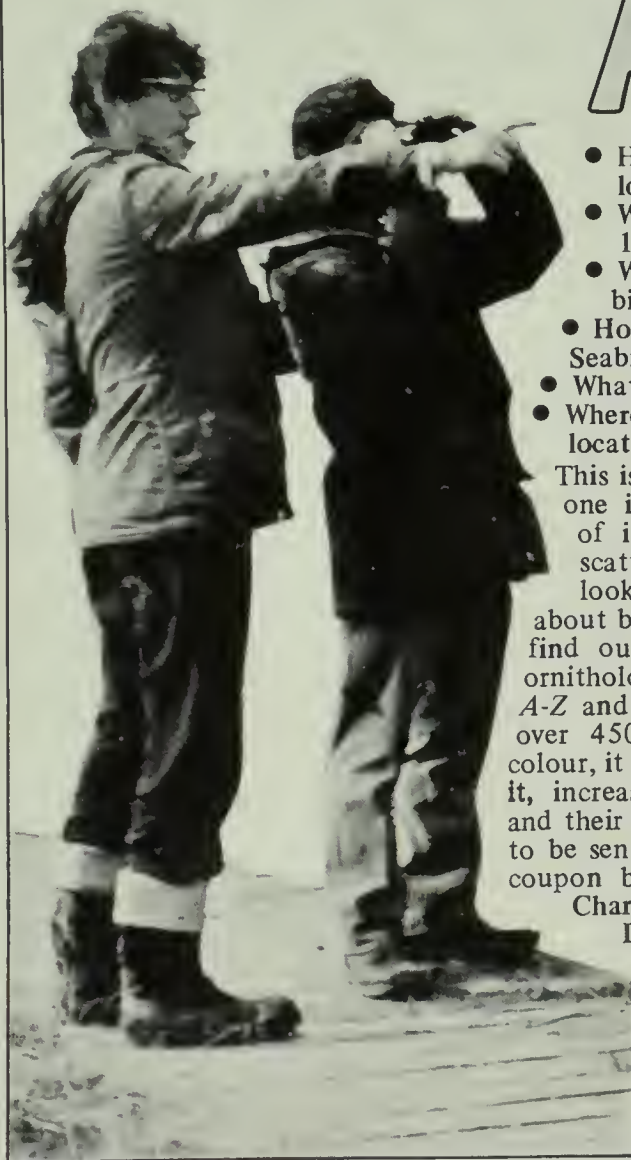
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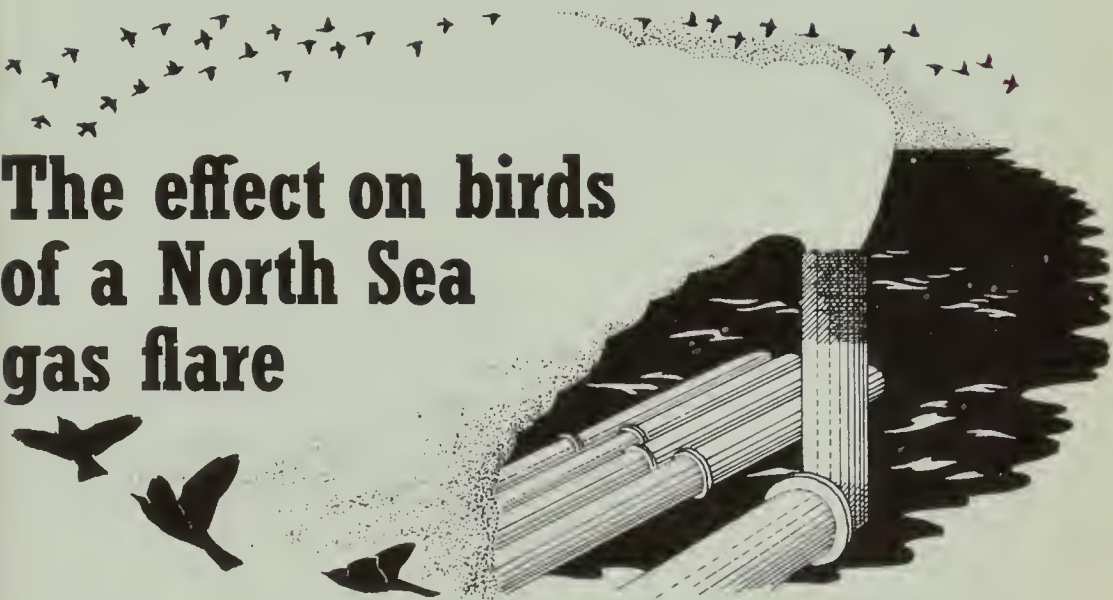
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The effect on birds of a North Sea gas flare



P. Hope Jones

How lethal to migrant birds are the oil-field flares?

The significance of bird deaths in gas flares has been a controversial subject in recent years, but reliable first-hand evidence has been elusive. Sage (1979a & b) focused attention on flares as a potential problem, while Bourne (1979) and Bourne *et al.* (1979) considered that the normal rate of mortality from this cause was probably not high. In order to make direct observations on the number and behaviour of migratory birds encountering a gas flare, five consecutive weeks were spent on an installation in the Brent oilfield in the autumn of 1979; this paper reports the results.

Methods

Observations were made between 22nd September and 25th October from the accommodation rig *Treasure Finder*, which, until 17th October, was moored adjacent to the oil production platform *Brent Bravo* (plates 276 & 277) at 61°03'N 01°43'E: almost 200km northeast of Lerwick, Shetland. At most oil-production platforms, 'waste' gas is burned off, and at *Bravo* this flaring was done at the end of a boom extending out towards the south, the jet being approximately 55m above sea level. A flame was always burning during the period of observation, and its orientation was determined by the wind direction; this very hot, yellow flame was about 20m long, tailing into a plume of grey, sometimes black, smoke.

Initially, flare watches were made in late evening and then before dawn, but, from 1st October, half-hour watches were undertaken beginning at 22.30 hours (all times GMT), 00.30, 02.30 and 04.30. From a vantage point at 80-100m distance, the flare was clearly visible, together with its boom and the surrounding airspace. The flame was not looked at continuously (and never through binoculars) because of possible irreparable damage to the eyes from infra-red radiation, but the whole area was under surveillance of direct or peripheral vision throughout each half-hour period; dark glasses were worn for eye protection. The numbers of all birds at or near the flare were noted. The rig was slightly less noisy at night; it was possible then to hear the calls of thrushes *Turdus* above the background noise level, and these calls were noted even when the birds involved were not positively attracted close to the flare.

Results

Landbird migrants

In the majority of half-hour watches, no birds were seen at or near the flare. Out of 88 watches completed, birds were positively attracted close to the flare on only seven occasions, while thrushes were heard in the vicinity (though not positively attracted) on another nine. Of these 16 incidents, 14 occurred during misty weather, often with rain, and two occurred during clear weather, although in the latter cases only four thrushes and two finch-type birds were involved (table 1).

Table 1. Results of watches at 'Brent Bravo' flare, with wind and weather conditions, 24th September to 16th October 1979

Figures indicate the number of watches in each category: **bold print** = positive attraction of birds; normal print = birds seen or heard, but not close to the flare; (brackets) = no birds were recorded. SE includes SSE

Wind direction	Mist or low cloud with rain (n = 19)			Mist or low cloud, no rain (n = 15)			Clear with rain (n = 6)			Clear, no rain (n = 48)			Totals
N	1									(2)			3
NE	(2)						(2)			(4)			8
E	2	1		1									4
SE		1	(5)	1			(1)	(2)			1	(19)	30
S		3	(4)	1			(8)	(1)			1	(10)	28
SW										(4)			4
W										(6)			6
NW				1			(1)			(1)			3
calm				2									2
Totals	3	5	(11)	2	4	(9)	0	0	(6)	2	0	(46)	88

Most positive attractions occurred in those watches in the period beginning 04.30, and, although some were occasionally heard calling earlier in the night, the thrushes at those times were not seen close to the flare (table 2).

Table 2. Time of night when birds seen or heard near 'Brent Bravo' flare during 88 half-hour watches, 24th September to 16th October 1979

Time (GMT)	Occasions when birds heard calling	Occasions when birds seen near flare
22.30-23.00	4	0
00.30-01.00	3	0
02.30-03.00	2	1
04.30-05.00	0	6

The numbers and behaviour of birds seen close to the flare are detailed below:

30th September Wind S, force 4, clear; 04.30-05.00. One thrush-sized bird flew out from the rig to below the flare, then quickly flew back onto the *Bravo* platform.

1st October Wind SE, force 3, clear; 04.30-05.00. Three thrush-type birds were seen flying very close to the flare on several occasions. Two finch-type birds were seen flying around the flame; they settled on the flare boom and flew up towards the jet in small hops, then flew well out away from the flame, but came back to the boom.

10th October Wind S, force 4, thick mist; 04.30-05.00. Flocks of about 40 and of ten Redwings *Turdus iliacus* were seen flying below the flare; they probably circled the rig-plus-platform, but always passed below the flare jet. An additional watch, 05.30-06.30, with the same weather conditions, found presumably the same two parties still flying around the installation; after 06.00—when it was distinctly light—the parties broke up, and several individuals flew up close to the jet. One Blackbird *T. merula* flew close to the jet at 06.15; it hovered there briefly before flying back again to the rig.

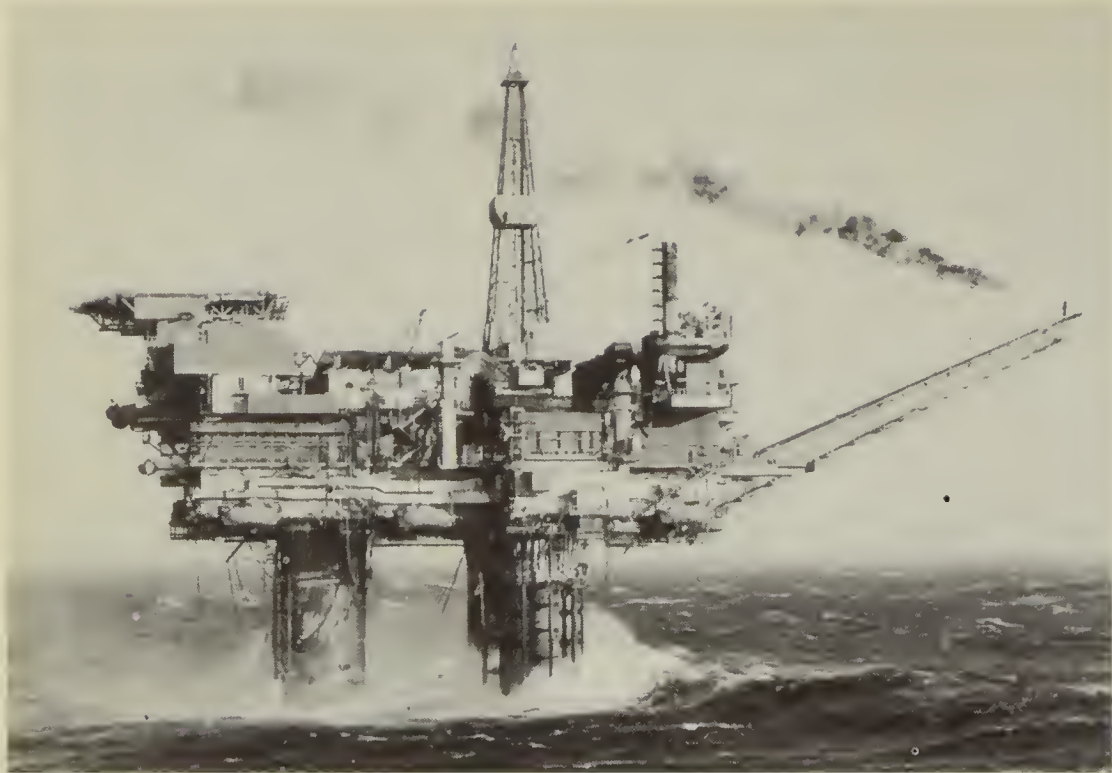
11th October Wind E, force 3, moderate rain with fog base at about 80m; 02.30-03.00. A loose group of about 13 Redwings was flying low over the sea, then rising up to about 40m when nearing the flare on several occasions, although always passing well below the jet.

12th October Wind NE, force 3, heavy rain with fog base at about 100m; 04.30-05.00. Small parties of Redwings (totalling probably not more than 50 birds) were flying low over the sea, and some rose up towards the flare before flying down again; one individual reached almost the base of the flame before peeling away downwind, stiff flying. These, or other, Redwings were flying around the rig at dawn, and a few still at 11.00.

13th October Wind NW, force 1, misty with fog base at about 100m; 04.30-05.00. After no activity earlier in the night, there were large numbers of birds flying above the flare and circling the rig-plus-platform at about 80-100m above sea level. One flock of 400-500 flew low over the flare and broke into confusion as individuals flew in all directions, some coming close up to the flare (perhaps within 20m) before flying away again. There was continuous calling from Redwings, with fewer calls from Fieldfares *Turdus pilaris* and Song Thrushes *T. philomelos*, although at that stage the percentage species-composition could not be estimated.

On this day, observations were continued through until noon, and, when the birds became properly visible at about 06.45, there were an estimated 4,000 Redwings and 200 Fieldfares, with a scatter of small numbers of Song Thrushes, Blackbirds and Starlings *Sturnus vulgaris*. By this time, all species had co-ordinated into a continuous circling of the rig-plus-platform in a clockwise direction (E-S-W-N) so that, by 07.30, a complete 'Saturn ring' of birds encircled the installation, flying past the flare at about the same altitude as the flame but mainly more than 100m away from it. By 08.30, this band of birds had descended to about 40m above sea level, and until noon it continued at about that level, occasionally much higher as a helicopter arrived and left, occasionally lower, though never very close to the sea surface. Numbers fell away rapidly after noon. Even during the daylight, a few birds would occasionally break away from the ring to head closer into the flare and, at times, Starlings would perch on the boom a mere 30m from the jet, but no bird was ever seen to fly into the flame; others would fly up to the base of the flare then return to the ring to continue circling.

14th October Wind E, force 3, drizzle with fog base at about 150m; 04.30-05.00. Small numbers of Redwings were seen low over the sea, some rising up towards the flare and sometimes very close to it, but all passing below and flying on beyond.



276. Brent Bravo platform, from west, showing flare and its boom extending out towards south, October 1979 (*Shell Expro*)

Additionally, there were nine watches in which Redwings, and occasional Fieldfares and Song Thrushes, were heard and/or seen, but none of these birds was attracted to the close vicinity of the flare. From 9th October, groups of up to 40 Starlings (usually fewer, though 170 on 15th) seemed temporarily resident on the rig and the platform; these birds became active before dawn, but never showed the slightest interest in the flare.

Not one bird was ever seen to fly into the flame; after 1st October, the flare was observed for at least 25% of the period between midnight and dawn, so the results are likely to be representative. Especially on 13th October, with a calm sea, any corpses dropping into the water would have been seen easily.

Seabirds

It was obvious that some seabirds were attracted to the surface of the sea directly below the flare, although only one was ever seen flying high up near the jet: a Shag *Phalacrocorax aristotelis* which circled once fairly close to the flare, though below it, before flying off; this was at 05.35 hours on 27th September. The species and numbers involved, as seen during the systematic flare watches, are shown in table 3.

Herring Gulls *Larus argentatus*—by far the most abundant species—showed a variety of behaviour patterns which could be classified (and tentatively interpreted) as follows:

- A Sitting on the sea surface, facing the wind, head hunched into shoulders (roosting)
- B Sitting with neck extended, but not obviously searching (very low intensity food searching)
- C Sitting with neck extended, obviously searching (food searching, at intensities varying from desultory to avid)

D Sitting, and dipping bills into the sea, apparently picking up food items (feeding, again at varying intensities)

Table 3. Numbers of seabirds at night under 'Brent Bravo' flare, autumn 1979

The figures for each date represent the maximum number seen in one of the four half-hour watches. Fog occurred on 10th, 11th and 13th October

Species	SEPTEMBER										OCTOBER															
	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16			
Fulmar																										
<i>Fulmarus glacialis</i>	1	14	1	1	6	3						1	1	1				2								
Great Black-backed																										
Gull <i>Larus marinus</i>		4	5	3	2	1	2	1	1	1	1	1					1	2		4			1	1		
Herring Gull																										
<i>L. argentatus</i>				2	2	1	3	2	2	12	4	15	2	2	1	9	40	82	48	99		4	35	30		
Common Gull																										
<i>L. canus</i>				1	1												1									
Black-headed Gull																										
<i>L. ridibundus</i>																									1	
Kittiwake																										
<i>Rissa tridactyla</i>							2																			

The last three types were duplicated by flying birds:
BB Flying slowly, usually into the wind, not obviously searching
CC Flying slowly into the wind, obviously searching
DD Flying slowly into the wind and occasionally dropping to the surface to pick up items, usually from flight, occasionally by settling on the water
The frequencies of each type, for five species, are shown in table 4.

Table 4. Incidence of different behaviour patterns of Fulmars *Fulmarus glacialis* and gulls *Larus* on the sea at night below 'Brent Bravo' flare, autumn 1979

Figures refer to number of half-hour periods in which a particular activity was noted for each species, irrespective of number of individuals involved; column letters are behaviour types (see text). Total number of half-hour watches = 88, but six were invalid for seabird observations because of fog. Number of valid watches without seabird sightings = 16

Species	SITTING ON SEA				FLYING		
	A (neck hunched)	B (not searching)	C (search- ing)	D (bill- dipping)	BB (not searching)	CC (search- ing)	DD (bill- dipping)
Fulmar							
<i>Fulmarus glacialis</i>	—	3	1	1	8	0	0
Great Black-backed Gull							
<i>Larus marinus</i>	2	4	2	6	9	4	0
Herring Gull <i>L. argentatus</i>	9	10	5	12	3	15	4
Common Gull <i>L. canus</i>	0	0	0	2	1	0	0
Black-headed Gull							
<i>L. ridibundus</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0	1

Despite intensive watching at 50-200m range with 10× binoculars (and good light from the flare), the birds' presumed food items were never identified; evidently they were small and probably comprised planktonic invertebrate animals and possibly small fish, though whether these were attracted to the bright light, or whether the light merely made visible to the gulls the normal nocturnal movements to the surface of various copepods, euphausiids and other planktonic organisms, is unknown. Lights from the rig were sufficient to illuminate the sea all around the rig (though obviously at a much lower intensity than under the flare); on rare occasions, a gull engaged in low-intensity searching over the sea away from the flare, but otherwise the only gulls visible would be those roosting some distance out in the lee of the rig or the *Bravo* platform, and obviously the feeding phenomenon was directly related to the effect of the flare.

Discussion

The major conclusion is that, at the *Brent Bravo* flare between 24th September and 16th October 1979, I saw no birds killed by the flare. No mortality was reported from the flares on *Alpha* or *Delta* platforms in the Brent field, except for one burnt corpse, probably of Redwing, given to me from the latter. During the autumn of 1979, up to ten birds were reported, by a competent observer, to have been killed in the flare at *Dunlin* platform in an adjacent oilfield. There is insufficient evidence at present to know whether this result is typical for other flares or for other seasons at *Brent Bravo* itself, but the absence of casualties indicates that even a large attraction of birds to a flare does not automatically result in casualties. Clearly, more series of systematic observations are essential before the general situation can be adequately described.

The situation is perhaps analogous to that at certain lighthouses, where migrants are sometimes attracted to the light in large numbers and where hundreds of birds may die in one night (e.g. Evans 1969). Presumably the same principles apply at flares: in overcast and misty conditions, night migrants are attracted to the bright light and, for reasons as yet unknown, die by flying at speed towards the light source, killing themselves (at lighthouses) against the glass or other parts of the building. Similar autumn attractions have been reported from lightships, e.g. *Kentish Knock* in 1952 (Owen 1953) and *Smith's Knoll* in 1953 (Peakall 1956): at the former 'many hundreds, possibly thousands' of birds were killed on the night of 31st October/1st November 1952 by flying into the lantern glass in overcast conditions with light rain; at the latter, several attractions occurred but without attendant mortality. Perhaps, therefore, a similar periodicity of attraction and mortality will emerge for gas flares: an occasional (usually rare) kill of substantial numbers at a few localities, with a background level of occasional small losses. It is premature to estimate the total annual mortality of birds in gas flares in the North Sea, and impossible even to guess at the quantitative impact of this on the population levels of the species involved.

While the fears of bird incineration are less acute than sometimes suggested, the effect of North Sea flares in attracting and detaining

migrants—which might otherwise have reached the safety of the British coast—is difficult to resolve. Radar studies of Scandinavian thrushes over the northern part of the North Sea (Myres 1964) showed that—in 1960 at least—these birds flew on a westerly or WSW heading and that, after an initial period of flying high, they descended to sea level near midnight before ascending again before dawn. At this stage, they often re-orientated to a heading between NNE and SSW, and this phenomenon was interpreted by Myres (1964) and by Lack (1963) as a mechanism for making landfall when they had overshot Scotland.



277. Aerial view of *Brent Bravo* and its flare, with accommodation rig *Treasure Finder* alongside, October 1979 (*Shell Expro*)

At *Brent Bravo*, thrushes on the night of 12th/13th October were first seen around the flare at 04.30 hours; they were definitely not present at 23.00, 01.00 or 03.00. During that night, patchy fog with a top level of 100-140m extended probably over much of the North Sea between southwest Norway and northeast Scotland, while over the Brent area there was probably a second layer of cloud between 1,500 and 2,500m. Since thrushes leaving the nearest Norwegian coast under good conditions are able to reach Shetland by midnight (Myres 1964), it is possible that disorientated birds were flying about for some time over the North Sea, perhaps gradually drifting at the speed of the light southerly or southeasterly wind before appearing in the Brent area. This type of drift was described by Lack (1963) from North Sea radar studies.

During the early morning of 13th October, the birds, perhaps unwilling to come aboard because of human disturbance and unable to orientate because of heavy overcast, circled many platforms in the Brent area (including *Cormorant* and *Brent Charlie* which at that time were without flares); it is likely that at least 20,000 thrushes were flying around oil installations in the Shetland Basin during that morning; the figure could have been very much higher. Complete cloud cover presumably precluded their being able to navigate during that day, and the following night, so by dawn on 14th they had been flying for 36 hours or more. At this stage, many of them were seen to come down into the sea around the rig, exhausted. Two

samples of Redwings were weighed: on 14th October, 13 caught alive on the rig had a mean weight of 44.4g (range 37-49), whilst 29 found dead during 14th-26th October had a mean weight of 36.4g (range 31-41); by contrast, 23 Redwings caught in Orkney on 13th October 1976 had a mean weight of 65.4g (range 57-72). Evidently, birds on the rig were exhausted: they had no visible reserves of subcutaneous fat and were almost certainly unable to reach land in any direction. Most oil installations are probably too noisy and busy to provide resting places for more than a few fit migrants; many of those birds which *do* eventually come aboard are probably already doomed through exhaustion.

I suspect, therefore, that the main cause of mortality in this incident was the extensive area of thick overcast for a long calm period. By 'holding' the apparently fit birds in the middle of the North Sea on 13th October, the oil installations may have prevented a proportion from reaching land. For most birds, the Saturn-ring effect throughout the morning of 13th may indicate that, instead of drifting aimlessly over a large extent of sea, they flew around in the same locality, thus reducing still further any slight chances of making a landfall.

These 1979 observations from one locality confirm that landbird migrants may be attracted in very large numbers to a North Sea gas flare, or even to a non-flaring installation, but suggest that this need not lead to any significant mortality. Doubtless there are occasions when large numbers have been, and will be, killed, but I agree with Bourne *et al.* (1979) in suggesting that the numbers involved are usually low. Presumably this involves a very small proportion of the numbers which migrate across the North Sea. The effect of the platform in detaining large numbers of migrants is at present debatable, and a series of detailed observations is needed before the effect of the oil installations on bird migration can be objectively evaluated.

Acknowledgments

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Summary

Observations were made over five weeks in autumn 1979 on birds attracted to the gas flare at the *Bravo* platform in the Brent oilfield, northeast of Shetland. Sample watches throughout the night recorded positive attractions of small numbers of birds on six occasions, and one massive attraction of thrushes *Turdus* on 13th October; these arrivals were usually after 03.00 GMT and often in conditions of mist or low-cloud, sometimes with rain. Not one bird was killed in the flare, but birds circled the installation in a 'Saturn-ring' effect for several hours after dawn on 13th October.

Seabirds, mainly Fulmars *Fulmarus glacialis* and gulls *Larus*, congregated on the sea below the flare at night, apparently to take food from the sea surface.

During the observation period, the direct effect of the flare in killing birds was apparently nil; its indirect impact in attracting and 'holding' disorientated migrants may have been significant, but the true effect is unknown. These early data cannot necessarily be considered typical, either for the Brent Field or for gas flares in general, until more systematic information is forthcoming.

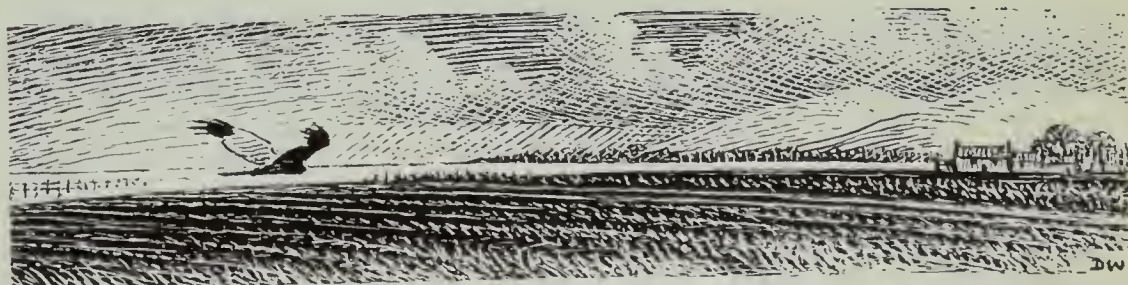
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Habitat and diet of male and female Hen Harriers in Scotland in winter

M. Marquiss



The Hen Harrier *Circus cyaneus* exhibits remarkable sexual dimorphism: cocks are about 10% smaller than hens and in adult plumage are predominantly grey, whereas adult hens (and first-year birds of both sexes) are brown with a white rump. It has been shown that in the breeding season cocks hunt in more open, less structured habitats than do hens and that they take smaller, more agile prey (Schipper *et al.* 1975; Balfour and MacDonald 1970; Picozzi 1978; Picozzi 1980). This paper provides data on Hen Harriers wintering in Scotland, which, taken with previously published material, imply a similar difference in the ecological needs of the sexes in winter.

Table 1. Numbers of grey and brown Hen Harriers *Circus cyaneus* seen in winters 1971-78 in different habitats

Area	Habitat	Grey	Brown	Total
Aberdeenshire & Kincardineshire upland	Heather moor	1	14	15
	Young forest	0	2	2
	Farmland bordering moor	2	2	4
Dumfriesshire upland	Heather moor	0	4	4
	Young forest	2	13	15
	Sheepwalk	0	6	6
Dumfriesshire coast	Afforested bog	4	0	4
	Farmland	10	3	13

Methods

I recorded all hunting harriers seen from September to March during 1971-73 in Aberdeenshire and Kincardineshire, and during 1974-78 in Dumfriesshire, noting their plumage and habitat. I also recorded the numbers of grey and of brown harriers attending communal winter roosts (three in Aberdeenshire and Kincardineshire 1971-73 and one near the coast in Dumfriesshire in 1977/78). In March 1978, I collected 78 pellets from the Dumfriesshire roost and identified their contents using the keys of Day (1965) and Yalden (1977) supplemented by my own reference material. For comparison, I also analysed 20 pellets collected in late February 1979 from a roost in Argyll.

Ratio of grey to brown individuals

In Aberdeenshire and Kincardineshire, harriers were most often seen on heather moorland, and only occasionally on moorland recently planted with conifers or on farmland bordering moorland. In Dumfriesshire, there

Table 2. Numbers of grey and brown Hen Harriers *Circus cyaneus* attending communal winter roosts in Scotland

Dumfriesshire: present study. Galloway: summary of data for two roosts, 'A' and 'B', from Watson & Dickson (1972). Argyll: summary of unpublished data from G. Booth and Dr I. Newton. Aberdeenshire and Kincardineshire: summary of three roosts in present study.

	Years	No. visits by observer(s)	NO. GREY BIRDS		NO. BROWN BIRDS		Ratio grey:brown birds
			PER VISIT Mean	PER VISIT Range	PER VISIT Mean	PER VISIT Range	
Dumfriesshire	1977/78	14	2.1	0-5	0.6	0-2	3.50
Galloway A	1966/67 & 1967/68	19	4.4	0-8	4.6	0-11	0.96
Galloway B	1970/71 & 1974/75	28	3.4	0-17	4.1	0-12	0.83
Galloway B	1967/68	17	2.1	0-10	6.2	1-15	0.34
Argyll	1977/78 & 1978/79	8	0.5	0-2	5.3	0-16	0.09
Aberdeenshire & Kincardineshire	1970/71 to 1972/73	9	0.1	0-1	5.4	1-10	0.02

was comparatively little heather moor and most harriers in the uplands were on newly afforested ground, with a few on nearby sheepwalk. In addition, harriers were seen frequently near the Dumfriesshire coast, where they hunted over rank vegetation, including newly afforested ‘raised bog’, areas of tall grass bordering ditches, wet areas and field edges, small reedbeds, rushy meadows with scattered gorse *Ulex europaeus*, and turnip and kale fields.

Of 46 sightings of Hen Harriers in upland habitats, only five were of grey individuals, whereas 14 of 17 on the Dumfriesshire coast were grey (table 1). Moreover, in upland habitats, only one of five records of grey birds was on heather moor, the others being on young forest or fields near moorland. There was a similar trend in the numbers of grey and brown harriers at roosts. In Aberdeenshire and Kincardineshire, I visited three roosts on a total of nine occasions, recording an average of 5.4 (SD $\pm$ 3.5) harriers per visit, but only once saw a grey individual (table 2). The average number of harriers seen on 14 visits to the Dumfriesshire coastal roost was 2.8 (SD $\pm$ 2.2) and grey outnumbered brown by three to one.

Analysis of pellets from roosts

From their percentage frequency in the Dumfriesshire pellet sample, passerines (mostly finch-sized or smaller) formed 80% of the items, small mammals 18% and small wading birds 2% (table 3). Prey items were

Table 3. Analysis of prey items in 78 pellets collected in March 1978 from Dumfriesshire winter roost of Hen Harriers *Circus cyaneus*

Prey species	No. pellets	% frequency
Common shrew <i>Sorex araneus</i>	1	0.8
Bank vole <i>Clethrionomys glareolus</i>	3	2.5
Field vole <i>Microtus agrestis</i>	9	7.4
Unidentified vole (Microtinae)	2	1.7
Wood mouse <i>Apodemus sylvaticus</i>	7	5.8
Snipe <i>Gallinago gallinago</i>	1	0.8
Small wader (Charadriiformes)	1	0.8
Skylark <i>Alauda arvensis</i>	2	1.7
Unidentified pipit (probably Meadow <i>Anthus pratensis</i>)	4	3.3
Wren <i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i>	13	10.7
Dunnock <i>Prunella modularis</i>	2	1.7
Stonechat <i>Saxicola torquata</i>	1	0.8
Redwing <i>Turdus iliacus</i>	8	6.6
Blue Tit <i>Parus caeruleus</i>	4	3.3
Unidentified tit <i>Parus</i>	2	1.7
Corn Bunting <i>Emberiza calandra</i>	5	4.1
Yellowhammer <i>E. citrinella</i>	3	2.5
Reed Bunting <i>E. schoenichus</i>	9	7.4
Chaffinch <i>Fringilla coelebs</i>	2	1.7
Greenfinch <i>Carduelis chloris</i>	1	0.8
Unidentified small finch <i>Carduelis</i>	6	5.0
Bullfinch <i>Pyrrhula pyrrhula</i>	9	7.4
Unidentified finch/bunting (Fringillidae/Emberizidae)	4	3.3
Starling <i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>	1	0.8
Unidentified small passerine (finch-sized or smaller)	18	14.9
Unidentified large passerine (thrush-sized)	3	2.5

nearly all of species associated with the coastal habitats known to be used by harriers, the only exceptions being Blue Tits *Parus caeruleus* and Bullfinches *Pyrrhula pyrrhula*, which are primarily woodland birds. Blue Tits, however, often occurred in hedges and reedbeds and crossed open ground, while Bullfinches were vulnerable as they fed from heather by young plantations.

Remains of rabbits *Oryctolagus cuniculus* or hares *Lepus* were found in 14 of the 20 pellets from the Argyll roost, remains of gamebirds in six, and of passerines and small mammals in three each (table 4). Grey harriers used this roost infrequently (table 2) and in the month before pellet collection only brown individuals were seen.

Table 4. Analysis of prey items in 20 pellets collected in late February 1979 from Argyll winter roost of Hen Harriers *Circus cyaneus*

Prey species	No. pellets	% frequency
Rabbit/hare (Lagomorpha)	14	53.8
Unidentified shrew (Soricidae)	1	3.8
Unidentified mouse/vole (Muridae/Microtinae)	2	7.7
Red Grouse <i>Lagopus lagopus</i>	4	15.4
Gamebird (Galliformes)	2	7.7
Redwing <i>Turdus iliacus</i>	1	3.8
Starling <i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>	1	3.8
Unidentified small finch <i>Carduelis</i>	1	3.8

Published analyses of pellet samples (Dickson 1970; Watson 1977) are available from two other roosts at which the numbers of grey and brown individuals were known (Watson & Dickson 1972). I have summarised the grey-to-brown ratios in table 2 and arranged the food data according to prey size in table 5. The greater the proportion of grey harriers attending a roost, the greater was the percentage frequency of passerine remains in pellets from the roost. Conversely, samples of pellets from roosts with more brown individuals contained more rabbit, hare and gamebird (mainly Red

Table 5. Percentage frequency of prey of various sizes in pellets from winter roosts of Hen Harriers *Circus cyaneus* and ratios of grey: brown birds attending these roosts

Galloway 'A' data from Dickson (1970); Galloway 'B' data from Watson (1977)

	Dumfriesshire 1977/78	Galloway 'A' 1966/67 & 1967/68	Galloway 'B' 1970/71 & 1974/75	Argyll 1978/79
No. pellets in sample	78	32	80	20
No. prey items identified	121	41	73	26
Prey:				
% rabbit/hare (Lagomorpha)	0	0	13	54
% gamebirds (Galliformes)	0	2	5	23
% waders (Charadriiformes)	2	5	3	0
% small mammals	18	10	6	11.5
% passerines	80	78	68	11.5
% beetles and moth cocoons	0	5	5	0
Ratio grey:brown Hen Harriers	3.50	0.96	0.83	0.09

Grouse *Lagopus lagopus scoticus*) remains. Watson's roost 'B' in 1967/68 held on average three times as many brown as grey harriers. I was unable to include the pellet analysis for this winter in table 5 because many bird items were not identified specifically and so could not even be ascribed to size categories. Nevertheless, at least 17% of items were rabbits or hares and 14% Red Grouse: a greater proportion than in pellet samples from the same roost in winters when fewer brown harriers were present, and thus fitting the trend apparent in table 5.

Discussion

Samples of pellets from roosts with mostly brown harriers contained more grouse and rabbits and hares and fewer small passerines than did pellets from roosts with mainly grey harriers. This was also the main difference between the prey of the sexes in the breeding season, both in Orkney, where hens took more rabbits (Balfour & MacDonald 1970; Picozzi 1980) and in Kincardineshire, where hens took more grouse and rabbits and hares and fewer pipits *Anthus* than did cocks (Picozzi 1978). This similarity suggests that the ratio of grey to brown harriers at roosts is related to sex ratio rather than age ratio. This in turn is consistent with the distribution of sightings of grey harriers. Those habitats frequented largely by brown harriers in winter have large prey available, but few passerines. In the uplands, grouse and hares are resident, whereas most passerines leave for the winter. The only abundant small prey then available are voles (*Microtinae*) on newly afforested ground, and finches (*Fringillidae*) and buntings (*Emberizidae*) in nearby farmland. It is likely that female harriers can winter on or near their upland breeding habitats, but wherever small prey is scarce most cocks will have to travel greater distances to find a suitable winter food supply. This may explain why, in Kincardineshire, juvenile cocks dispersed farther from their heather moor natal areas than did juvenile hens (Picozzi 1978).

In several species of raptors, one sex moves farther (or a greater proportion of one moves) than the other (Newton 1979). A difference between the preferred habitats of the sexes has also been previously noted in, for example, the American Kestrel *Falco sparverius* (Koplin 1973) and the Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus* (Marquiss & Newton 1979), and in the latter study this was also explained in terms of the distribution of prey of different size: cocks more often hunted woodland where small songbirds could be captured easily, while hens preferred open country with more large songbirds and waders.

Acknowledgments

I thank R. Mearns and A. Village for contributing some of the observations of harriers in Dumfriesshire. Dr I. Newton collected pellets from the Argyll roost and, together with G. Booth, provided data on the numbers of grey and brown individuals using this roost. Two of the roosts that I watched in Aberdeenshire and Kincardineshire were found by N. Picozzi and it was while accompanying him that I collected data. Dr I. Newton, N. Picozzi and A. D. Watson criticised drafts of the manuscript.

Summary

Hen Harriers *Circus cyaneus* seen in the winters 1971-73 in Aberdeenshire and Kincardineshire

and 1974-78 in Dumfriesshire were categorised according to whether they were grey (adult male) or brown (adult female and first-year). Grey individuals were seen most frequently in coastal farmland and rarely in the upland habitats favoured by brown harriers.

In winters 1971-73, three communal roosts in Aberdeenshire and Kincardineshire were attended almost exclusively by brown harriers, whereas, in Dumfriesshire, a roost in coastal raised bog was attended mainly by grey ones in the winter 1977/78. Most pellets from this roost contained the remains of small songbirds. By contrast, pellet analyses from roosts with mainly brown harriers showed more large prey items: a difference similar to that between the prey of cock and hen in summer.

These results imply that many cock harriers wintered in lowland habitats where they fed mainly upon small birds, whereas females, able to take hares *Lepus*, rabbits *Oryctolagus cuniculus* and Red Grouse *Lagopus lagopus*, could remain in upland habitats all year.

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Fifty years ago . . .

'The history of the Black-necked Grebe (*Podiceps n. nigricollis*) as a breeding species in Ireland is somewhat of a mystery . . . For several years prior to 1921 this species was known to breed in at least one locality by two observers, who have both since died . . . The locality was not divulged, and it was not until 1929 that the present writers, after years of careful search—no easy task when we consider the innumerable loughs scattered over the central and western plain of Ireland—discovered a considerable breeding colony of Black-necked Grebes on a secluded lough . . . It is a matter of extreme difficulty, not unattended with a certain amount of risk, to wade through these nesting haunts of the Black-necked Grebe, owing to the treacherous nature of the overgrown drains which intersect the reed bed, but one is well repaid for any personal discomfort.' C. V. STONEY and G. R. HUMPHREYS

Part 2 of the saga started last month: 'With reference to Mr J. H. Owen's interesting note on this subject, I venture to suggest that the action depicted was not intended to shelter the young but was merely the position of wings extended and back feather-tracts separated, which is habitually adopted by most birds when feeling too hot in the sun.' B. B. OSMASTON (*Brit. Birds* 24: 170-173 & 197, December 1930)

Bird scavengers on Orkney roads

P. Hope Jones



Bird mortality on British roads has been investigated by several workers (e.g. Hodson 1960, Finnis 1960, Dunthorn & Errington 1964), and the results of the BTO 'Road Deaths Enquiry, 1960-61' were presented by Hodson & Snow (1965). Relatively little mention, however, was made of scavenging on such road casualties. Soon after my arrival in Orkney in March 1976, I saw that scavenging of carrion on roads was widespread, at least on the Orkney Mainland; this report details some of the observations made up to January 1978. The raw data are stored by the Orkney Field Club in the Public Library at Kirkwall.

Unsystematic records

From November 1976 to January 1978 inclusive, I recorded all bird-scavenging incidents that I observed on Orkney roads, noting bird species, prey species, locality and time of day. These records were all incidental to other activities and were not in any way systematic, since the distance travelled, and the areas passed through, changed greatly from one month to the next. Since most of my activities were in the western part of Orkney Mainland, records in this report are restricted to that area, which is defined as the mainland west of the A963 road, cutting across the waist of the main island between the Bays of Kirkwall and Scapa.

A scavenging incident was defined as an event when a bird or birds had landed, apparently 'with intent', at or very near a corpse on the road surface. In many cases, the scavenger would be seen pulling meat from the prey, but in others it would be seen standing at the potential prey, and would be frightened away by my approaching vehicle. Nearby scavengers, obviously intent on the prey, but temporarily kept at bay by a dominant bird at the food, were also included in the records. The basic data (including systematic records, see pages 565-566) are set out in table 1. All the gull species which breed in Orkney (except Kittiwake *Rissa tridactyla*) and the three large crows were seen at carrion. Black-headed Gulls *Larus ridibundus*, although common in the county, were only twice observed at

Table 1. Interactions recorded in unsystematic and systematic observations of scavengers and their prey on roads in west Mainland, Orkney, November 1976 to January 1978

An interaction may comprise more than one bird (e.g. three Ravens), but two species (e.g. three Ravens and one Carrion Crow) comprise two interactions.

‘Other mammals’ were: common rat *Rattus norvegicus* and domestic cat *Felis*; ‘Other birds’ were: Fulmar *Fulmarus glacialis*, Oystercatcher *Haematopus ostralegus*, Lapwing *Vanellus vanellus*, Snipe *Gallinago gallinago*, Curlew *Numenius arquata*, Redshank *Tringa totanus*, Great Black-backed Gull, Lesser Black-backed Gull, Fieldfare *Turdus pilaris*, Redwing *T. iliacus*, Blackbird *T. merula* and domestic hen *Gallus*

Scavengers	PREY SPECIES						
	Rabbit	Brownhare	Hedgehog	Common Gull	Other mammals	Other birds	Total interactions
	<i>Oryctolagus cuniculus</i>	<i>Lepus capensis</i>	<i>Erinaceus europaeus</i>				
Great Black-backed Gull							
<i>Larus marinus</i>	74	11	1	-	-	3	89
Lesser Black-backed Gull							
<i>L. fuscus</i>	15	1	2	-	-	2	20
Herring Gull							
<i>L. argentatus</i>	5	2	-	-	-	-	7
Common Gull							
<i>L. canus</i>	22	-	5	4	2	8	41
Black-headed Gull							
<i>L. ridibundus</i>	2	-	-	-	-	-	2
Raven							
<i>Corvus corax</i>	19	1	-	-	-	-	20
Carrion Crow <i>C. corone</i> of race <i>cornix</i>	75	5	2	2	2	7	93
Rook							
<i>C. frugilegus</i>	1	1	-	-	-	-	1
TOTALS	213	20	10	6	4	20	273

road carrion, despite the fact that, in summer, many Black-headed and Common Gulls *L. canus* follow the roads in order to take live invertebrates by snatching from, or hovering over, the heads of roadside plants. Herring Gulls *L. argentatus*, too, were relatively scarce as scavengers. Rooks *Corvus frugilegus* were locally common throughout the year, and could regularly be seen foraging in roadside fields, but on only one occasion was this species (two individuals) seen pecking at a freshly dead rabbit *Oryctolagus cuniculus*.

Most records, therefore, related to three species: Great Black-backed Gull *L. marinus*, Common Gull and Carrion Crow *C. corone* (of the ‘hooded’ race *cornix*). Great Black-backs were most often seen at the larger prey species, but this may be misleading, since this species could easily devour small prey without being on the road for more than a few seconds: for example, D. Lea (verbally) and T. Eggeling saw one land in an Orkney field, pick up a dead Fieldfare *Turdus pilaris*, and swallow it in one gulp. On some occasions, these big gulls were seen to carry fair-sized prey (e.g. juvenile Oystercatcher *Haematopus ostralegus* and full-grown hedgehog *Erinaceus europaeus*) into adjoining fields, where they would not be disturbed by passing traffic.

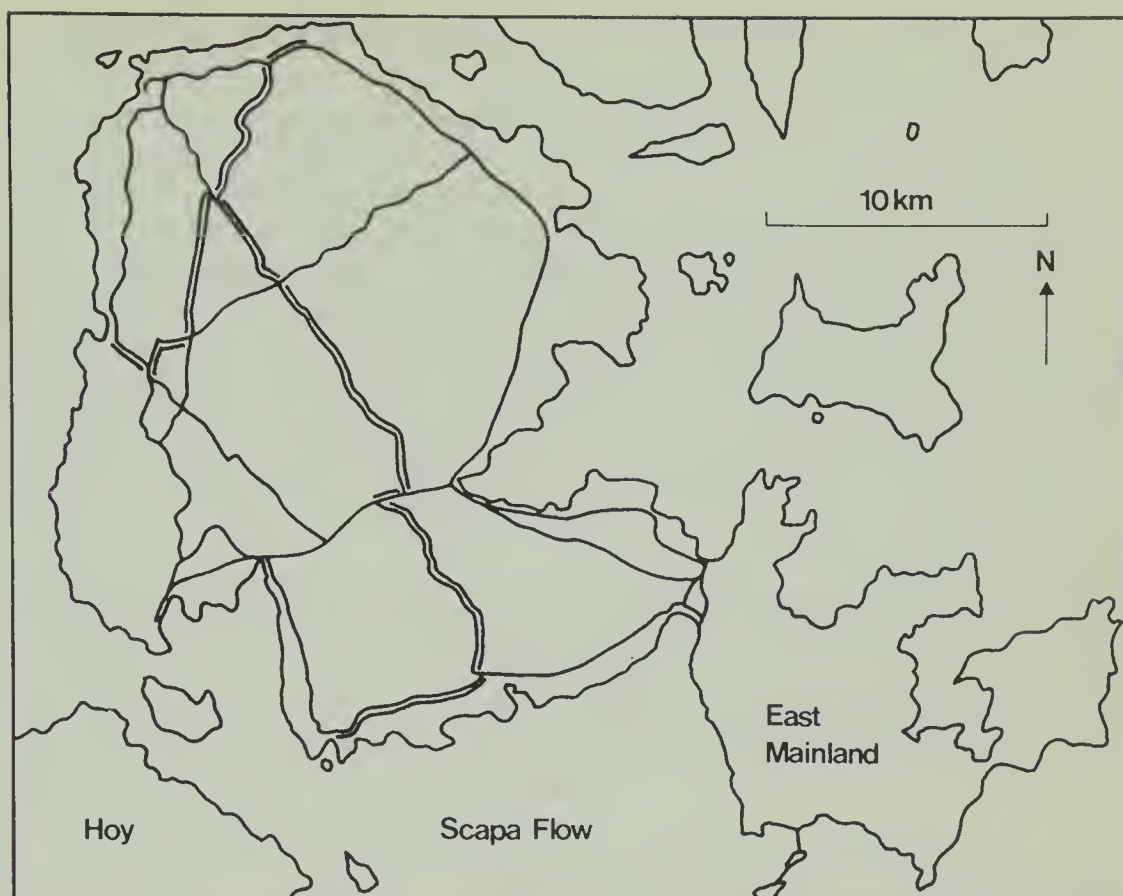


Fig. 1. Map of west Mainland, Orkney, showing roads travelled and where majority of bird scavenging records were made. Double line indicates standard route of systematic recording.

The smaller number of records of Herring Gulls, Lesser Black-backed Gulls *L. fuscus* and Ravens *C. corax* also showed these species to be attracted to the larger available prey, although they too could perhaps demolish small prey in a very short time, and thus not be seen in the act. Common Gulls and Carrion Crows were catholic in their tastes, and seemed to be attracted to whatever carrion was available, including, in the case of the gulls, corpses of their own species. Common Gulls were often watched assiduously following the route of a road, flying slowly and low over the surface, but it is perhaps more likely that they were looking for live invertebrates (possibly easier to spot on the smooth tarmac than in grassy fields) than for dead vertebrate road casualties. On one occasion, a Common Gull stooped and landed at a piece of old rope which, from a distance, I—and presumably also the gull—had mistaken for a prey item. Domestic cats *Felis* were quite often killed on the roads, but I had only one record (of two Carrion Crows) at such prey, which seemed to be shunned.

Of the 215 (unsystematic) scavenging incidents recorded, birds of more than one species were present together at 52 of them (24%), and, from their interactions, it was possible to discover the existence of an almost invariable hierarchy:

Great Black-backed Gull adult > immature > Lesser Black-backed Gull > Raven > Carrion Crow (> Common Gull)

Despite its being the third most abundant scavenger recorded, the Common Gull was seen only eight times at corpses with other gull species

(when it was always dominated by the larger gulls) and twice with crows, to which it also seemed subservient.

Numbers of birds of each species at a corpse were generally low (table 2). Of the unsystematic records, only 21% were made after 12.00 GMT, and, while this cannot take into account the number of journeys made pre- and post-noon (not recorded), I had the distinct impression that most road scavenging was done in the early mornings, perhaps because most of the prey items were killed at night or at dusk, and were freshly available to hungry scavengers at dawn. Most bodies were, anyway, soon squashed by passing traffic and made useless as prey, so it was to the birds' advantage to tackle the road corpses as soon as daylight permitted; and, of course, first come, first served. Hodson (1966) also found that Carrion Crows (of the race *corone*) scavenged along a main road in Northamptonshire particularly in the early mornings.

Table 2. Numbers of birds of the common scavenging species present at a scavenging incident, from unsystematic and systematic observations, Orkney, November 1976 to January 1978

Species are considered separately. For example, therefore, one incident comprising two Great Black-backed Gulls and one Raven would give records in two columns

	NUMBERS OF BIRDS IN ONE INCIDENT					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
Great Black-backed Gull						
<i>Larus marinus</i>	65	21	3	-	-	-
Lesser Black-backed Gull						
<i>L. fuscus</i>	19	1	-	-	-	-
Common Gull						
<i>L. canus</i>	37	4	-	-	-	-
Raven						
<i>Corvus corax</i>	5	11	2	1	-	1
Carrion Crow						
<i>C. corone</i> of race <i>cornix</i>	47	31	7	5	2	1

At Dungeness, Kent, in 1964-70, it was found that foxes *Vulpes vulpes*, as well as stoats *Mustela erminea* and weasels *M. nivalis*, scavenged corpses under power lines, and were perhaps attracted there on that account (Scott *et al.* 1972); none of these mammals occurs in Orkney, but corpses were occasionally removed by farm dogs *Canis* or feral cats, otherwise there was no obvious competition facing the wild birds.

Birds can learn the habit of eating road carrion while still very young: as early as July and August (perhaps within a month of fledging), some juvenile Lesser Black-backed and Common Gulls were seen eating from road casualties.

From the proximity of scavenger corpses to prey, it seemed that scavengers themselves became road casualties: some gulls, but no crows, in Orkney; although, in parts of England, Finnis (1956) reported Carrion Crows killed by traffic as they fed on rabbits and hedgehogs. On the mainly straight, open roads of west Mainland, crows in particular, and adult gulls to a lesser extent, seemed well able to judge the time needed to escape before a vehicle arrived. An interesting point was that, on the distant approach of a

vehicle, a dominant Great Black-backed Gull would regularly fly off before any attendant Carrion Crows, which could then dart in and make a quick snatch at the corpse before themselves flying off.

Systematic records

For several periods, in connection with seabird studies, I traversed daily, in the early mornings, various defined stretches of road totalling 46 km; on these journeys, I was able to record all scavenger-prey interactions on a daily basis. In addition, I kept a record of all Ravens and Carrion Crows that I saw within an estimated 100 m of the road; naturally, most attention had to be given to driving safety but, on such relatively quiet roads, and with such obvious birds in the almost treeless landscape, it was possible perhaps to count most within this band. Crows were not spaced equally along the route, and I do not know how many breeding territories I crossed, so the figure can be used only as an index (of the sort usually obtained in such a belt transect), but the method provided data which could be used to compare periods at different times of the year. Where it was not immediately obvious, I stopped to check the identification of potential prey on the road surface, leaving the specimen in place. The periods of observation, and the basic results, are set out in table 3.

Table 3. Systematic counts of bird scavengers and their prey on a route along 46 km of roads in west Mainland, Orkney, November 1976 to January 1978

	PERIOD OF OBSERVATION					
	2-10 Jan 1978	21 Feb- 7 Mar 1977	22 April- 4 May 1977	1-15 June 1977	16-30 June 1977	18 July- 1 Aug 1977
No. consecutive days of observation	9	15	13	15	15	15
No. of fresh prey items available per day	2.0	1.4	1.5	3.5	6.0	5.9
No. of daily scavenging incidents (gulls <i>Larus</i>)	0.6	0.4	0.3	0.8	2.1	1.1
No. of daily scavenging incidents (crows <i>Corvus</i>)	0.6	0.7	0.1	0.3	0.7	0.5
Available prey items per crow seen	0.1	0.1	0.3	0.7	1.8	1.8

The number of available prey items varied widely with the time of year, being greatest in mid and late summer, when large numbers of naive rabbits and newly-fledged birds were killed on the roads. In 1976 and 1977, many parts of Orkney held—to judge from the agricultural community's disquiet—a superabundance of rabbits; numbers freshly killed in the study section of 46 km were highest in late June, at about four per day, having risen from a minimum value of less than one per day in April/May. Numbers of bird corpses also rose towards the summer and reached a peak in July/August, at almost three per day, from nil in mid winter. In sum,

there were about six fresh items per day on that section of road in late summer, although only one to two per day in winter. It is not known whether any small prey had already been removed before my passage along the roads. There were usually slightly more corpses on Saturdays and Sundays than during the rest of the week, but the difference was not significant.

The number of scavenging incidents involving gulls showed a positive association with the number of fresh prey items ($P < 0.02$, Kendall's rank correlation coefficient), but those involving crows were not at all thus linked ($P > 1.0$). There are many biases inherent in such an analysis, but it does seem that, while crows certainly made use of available road corpses, they perhaps utilised them least in their Orkney breeding season (April to early June for Carrion Crows): 0.1-0.3 crow scavenging incidents daily in 46 km of road, compared with 0.5-0.7 daily during the rest of the year. There are many non-breeding crows in Orkney (N. Picozzi *in litt.*), so their general paucity as road scavengers in spring and early summer may indicate a preference for more readily available food sources elsewhere at that time.

Numbers of crows *seen* on and from the road depend, among many other things, on the birds' conspicuousness. While one would expect this group to be secretive in the breeding season, it was rather surprising to find them relatively scarce in periods right through from April to August; in winter, they were very much more frequent, and so the number of crows seen tended to vary inversely with the number of available prey items. The absence or relative inconspicuousness of Carrion Crows in the April-July observation periods was paralleled by Ravens, which were then at their scarcest along the roads. The numbers of both species are given in table 4.

Table 4. Relative abundance of Ravens *Corvus corax* and Carrion Crows *C. corone* (of 'hooded' race *cornix*) seen on 46 km of transect along roads in west Mainland, Orkney, November 1976 to January 1978

	PERIOD OF OBSERVATION					
	2-10 Jan 1978	21 Feb- 7 Mar 1977	22 April- 4 May 1977	1-15 June 1977	16-30 June 1977	18 July- 1 Aug 1977
Total no. of Carrion Crows seen	129	199	62	80	47	13
Average no. per day	16.1	13.3	4.8	5.3	3.1	2.9
Total no. of Ravens seen	27	28	3	0	4	6
Average no. per day	3.4	1.9	0.2	0	0.3	0.4
Ravens as per- centage of total no. of crows	17.3	12.3	4.6	0	7.8	12.2

Discussion

Unfortunately, there are no systematic data for the autumn or early winter, but, despite this, and the existence of many variables, there did seem to be a genuine pattern through the year in the availability of prey and in the

response of the two groups of scavengers, gulls and crows. It is impossible to say whether this pattern is the same every year, and equally difficult to assess how valuable the supply of road carrion is for the scavengers.

Kinnear (1978) drew attention to Common and Black-headed Gulls feeding on road carrion in Shetland, and Coleman (1968) recorded Common Gulls feeding on corpses of common rat *Rattus norvegicus* and hedgehog in Norfolk. The scavenging activities of crows are well known, and Holyoak (1968) found carrion to be an important source of food for Ravens and Carrion Crows at a variety of localities in lowland England and Wales: the phenomenon of birds scavenging on road carrion is surely widespread in Britain. Here all these birds are facultative scavengers (in the terminology of Pomeroy 1975): that is, they are catholic feeders which occasionally take carrion, not obligate scavengers, such as vultures, which feed almost exclusively on dead animal matter. To the gulls and crows in Orkney, road casualties may be merely a bonus, although perhaps some individuals may come to specialise in such scavenging. The supply is evidently much used by the Carrion Crows, but whether it forms a significant part of their total diet I cannot say. Perhaps the glut comes at a time when other food is freely available (hence the crows' apparent lack of interest in spring and early summer?), but when, in mid winter, a good supply of carrion could mitigate a shortage of food, the carrion itself is in short supply.

Scavenging is common and easily observed on the Orkney Mainland, but its value in the feeding economy of the scavengers, and its frequency in relation to the rest of Britain, are as yet unknown.

Acknowledgments

I am grateful to David Lea for having undertaken the survey of the standard route on two days when I was ill. An early draft of the paper was considerably improved by helpful comments from C. J. Booth, D. Lea and N. Picozzi.

Summary

Between November 1976 and January 1978, I kept records of birds scavenging on mammal and bird corpses on roads through the west Mainland of Orkney. A total of 273 bird species/prey interactions was recorded. All the local gull species (except Kittiwake *Rissa tridactyla*) and the three large crows engaged in this activity to varying extents. Carrion Crows *Corvus corone* of the 'hooded' race *corix* and Common Gulls *Larus canus* tackled a wide variety of available corpses, while Ravens *C. corax* and the larger gulls were perhaps more attracted to the larger prey such as brown hares *Lepus capensis* and rabbits *Oryctolagus cuniculus*. An almost invariable dominance hierarchy was apparent: Great Black-backed Gull *L. marinus* adult > immature > Lesser Black-backed Gull *L. fuscus* > Raven > Carrion Crow (> Common Gull).

Periods of systematic observation showed that prey availability varied considerably with the season, being highest in mid to late summer; the incidence of gull scavenging tended to follow these changes, but crow scavenging was apparently not related to them. It is not known what value the road corpses have in the feeding economy of the various scavengers.

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Greater Sand Plover: new to Britain and Ireland

A. R. Kitson, B. A. E. Marr and R. F. Porter



On 9th December 1978, a *Charadrius* plover was found on the mudflats of Pagham Harbour, West Sussex. At first, it was considered to be a Kentish Plover *C. alexandrinus*, but BAEM, when shown the bird in failing afternoon light, realised that it was too big for that species, and the possibility of a sand plover occurred to him. We went to the site the following morning and located it in a tidal creek running through saltmarsh. At a range of about 120m, through 25 × 'scopes in fairly good light, ARK and RFP soon considered it to be a Greater Sand Plover *C. leschenaultii*, both having experience of the species from abroad. But, aware of the similarity of Lesser Sand Plover *C. mongolus*, which RFP had seen in Baluchistan in 1972 and BAEM in Australia in 1977, we watched the bird until sure of its relative size, size of bill and length of legs; finally, it called, leaving us in no doubt that it was indeed a Greater Sand Plover, the first for Britain and Ireland.

The Greater Sand Plover was watched for one hour and 40 minutes on 10th December before it flew out to the centre of the harbour and was lost to sight. It turned up again the next day and thereafter daily until 1st January 1979, when it was last seen. During its stay, it showed great site-fidelity, almost always frequenting the same creek at low tide at the northwest corner of the harbour near Sidlesham Ferry. Over the period, it gradually

came farther up the creek, closer to the sea-wall, allowing observation from as little as 6m in the end, and was seen by well over 1,000 observers. It was twice seen roosting with other waders (Dunlin *Calidris alpina*, Ringed Plover *Charadrius hiaticula* and Turnstone *Arenaria interpres*) at high tide on a shingle spit in the southwest of the harbour at Church Norton. Photographs were taken at its more confiding stage (plates 278-280). Towards the end of its stay, it showed signs of succumbing to the freezing weather, and by 1st January it appeared moribund. When it could not be found thereafter it was thought likely that it had died.



278-280. Greater Sand Plover *Charadrius leschenaultii*
(from colour transparencies: C. R. Janman):

278 early December 1978 in dull light, dark scapulars heightening paleness of coverts; 279 & 280 January 1979 in bright light, dark scapulars not evident, bill looking large in 279 but foreshortened in 280

Description

First impressions were of a typical plover in shape and actions, with plumage similar to female Kentish Plover, but larger than Ringed Plover, about the size of Turnstone, and with rather long legs (which were not black) and strikingly heavy black bill. The following more detailed description was obtained:

SIZE & SHAPE Compared directly with Redshank *Tringa totanus*, Spotted Redshank *T. erythropus*, Grey Plover *Pluvialis squatarola*, Bar-tailed Godwit *Limosa lapponica*, Oystercatcher *Haematopus ostralegus*, Ringed Plover and Dunlin: larger than last two, smaller than the other species, and thought to be about size of Turnstone, or perhaps very slightly smaller. Against Ringed Plover, clearly larger, by about 25%: longer, taller, plumper, more barrel-chested. Shape like Kentish Plover, but legs proportionally longer. Head typically sunk into shoulders, presenting squat, neckless appearance, although occasionally neck extended. Crown domed, peaking just behind eye. Wings and tail seemed to come to common point, although photographs indicate that wing tips may have fractionally over-reached tail tip. Legs long in comparison with Ringed Plover. On 23rd December, seen side by side with Dunlin and legs judged to be $1\frac{1}{2}$ times length of the Dunlin's, which, taking average Dunlin tarsus measurement as 25mm (Prater *et al.* 1977), gives absolute tarsus length of 37.5mm (within the range for Greater but outside that for Lesser Sand Plover: Prater *et al.* 1977). In flight, feet projected fractionally beyond tail tip. Bill conspicuously large: longer and deeper than Ringed Plover's. Length of bill estimated to equal the distance from base of bill to behind eye, about $\frac{2}{3}$ of head-length. Bill deep, particularly at base, running to blunt point and usually appearing cleanly dagger-shaped, but, at some angles, indication of distended gonys. **HEAD** Forehead and supraloral area white, merging through pale buff to dun-coloured crown. The white and pale buff continued backwards over eye in very narrow supercilium (so narrow that overlooked initially), widening again behind

eye and over ear-coverts as buffish-white flash. Crown feathers with minute pale buff fringes. Nape slightly paler and sandier than crown and mantle. Lores and ear-coverts dun, joined under eye, about same colour as crown, though appearing darker with distance and at acute angles, clearly demarcated from white of chin and cheeks, the latter continuing onto sides of neck as partial collar. **UPPERPARTS** Back dun. Rump dun with whitish sides. **UPPERWING** Two-tone: pale coverts, dark primaries and secondaries. Lesser, median and greater coverts buffy, slightly paler than back, with small dun centres. Tertiaries dun fringed buff. Primaries and secondaries dark brown. In flight, showed fairly conspicuous wing-bar, extending along base of secondaries and broadening onto base of inner primaries. Scapulars dun, appearing on 10th December marginally darker than back and darker than neighbouring coverts (plate 278), presenting a barely discernible V from behind, but appearing on subsequent dates (in brighter light) to be concolorous with back (plate 279). **UNDERWING** White. **UNDERPARTS** Dun pectoral patches, neat and rather square-cut, joined across upper breast by barely perceptible line. Rest of underparts white. **TAIL** Dun, darker sub-terminally, with whitish outer feathers and sides of uppertail-coverts, latter running into whitish sides of rump. (These features were not observed clearly in the field, but show on a photograph by C. R. Janman.) **BARE PARTS** Legs greyish flesh or greenish flesh, fairly pale (even paler than those of juvenile Ringed Plover alongside). Eye appeared black. Bill black. **CALL** Heard several times in flight: a short, dry trilling, usually repeated twice, 'prrr prrr' or 'trrrt trrrt', reminiscent of Turnstone.

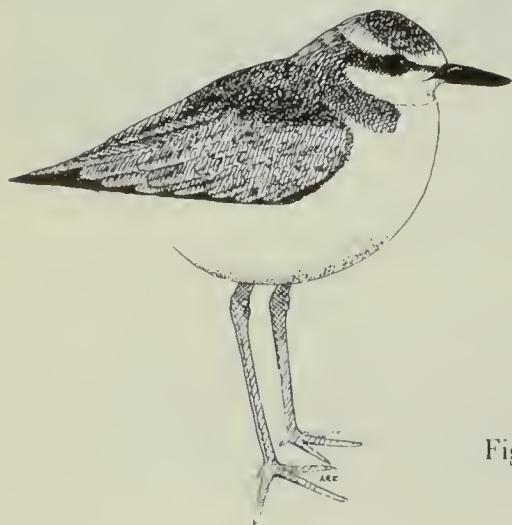


Fig. 1. Greater Sand Plover *Charadrius leschenaultii*, West Sussex, December 1978/January 1979
(A. R. Kitson)

Behaviour

The Greater Sand Plover frequented the higher, drier parts of a muddy creek which was partly covered with an alga *Enteromorpha* and which ran through a saltmarsh of cord-grass *Spartina* and sea-purslane *Halimione portulacoides*, bordered by glasswort *Salicornia*. It often stood motionless for several minutes at a time, but was often also seen feeding, stopping, starting and pecking at the surface of the mud in typical plover fashion. It evidently found no shortage of food in the early days and was noted to catch ragworms (Nereidae) on several occasions, a tiny crab (Decapoda), and other unidentifiable items. The ragworms were usually washed in the tidal stream at the bottom of the creek: the Greater Sand Plover, having taken one in its beak, would run rapidly down to the water's edge and dunk it vigorously a few times before swallowing it. When walking or running (which it did with long, fast steps and horizontal carriage) it was noted to wag its tail-end slightly. It was seen occasionally in flight, when disturbed by, for instance, an aggressive Grey Plover or a Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea*.

Identification

The Greater Sand Plover is a member of a group of five Palearctic plovers in the genus *Charadrius* which share certain structural and plumage characters, among them a red breast-band in summer plumage (Nielsen 1975). Between us, we have seen all of the four others: Lesser Sand Plover, Caspian Plover *C. asiaticus*, Oriental Plover *C. veredus* and Dotterel *C. morinellus*. The Pagham bird was at no time considered to be a Dotterel (which has, for example, an extensive breast-band broken by a white crescent), or a Caspian Plover, or an Oriental Plover (which have, besides other features, a more attenuated build, strong supercilia, much reduced wing-bars and brown underwings), and the only problem lay in elimination of Lesser Sand Plover.

At the time, all of us knew Greater Sand Plover and two of us had seen Lesser. Since then, we have all gained fresh experience of Greater (ARK as soon as March 1979 in Turkey), and two of us (BAEM and RFP) have seen Lesser (January 1980 in Thailand). Drawing on these experiences, and referring to the literature, we are able to qualify the identification of the Pagham individual as Greater rather than Lesser Sand Plover, based on the following criteria:

(i) *Size* Greater is larger than Lesser in all respects, there being virtually no overlap in measurements (Prater *et al.* 1977), although there is a cline in size of Lessers, those from the eastern part of the range being largest and those from the western part being smallest. A similar cline occurs in Greater. Notwithstanding, most Lessers are barely larger in bulk than Ringed Plover, whereas Greater is considerably larger. We judged the Pagham bird to be 25% larger than Ringed Plover: a size expected for Greater, but not for Lesser.

(ii) *Tarsus* As stated above, the observed tarsus length is in agreement with Greater, not Lesser.

(iii) *Bill* Our estimation of the bill length as equal to the distance from its base to behind the eye is in accord with that of Greater, whereas the bill of

Lesser is equal in length to the distance from base of bill to the eye (Sinclair & Nicholls 1980). The great depth of the bill, particularly at the base, also fits Greater, not Lesser.

(iv) *Ear-coverts* Sinclair & Nicholls (1980) stated that 'Lesser sometimes shows a darker, contrasting feathering from just in front of and below the eye and extending back to include the ear-coverts; Greater never shows this character.' We have been unable to verify this. Greater Sand Plovers (including the Pagham bird) have lores and ear-coverts which look darker than the crown—even blackish, at a distance and at acute angles—whereas, at close range, these areas usually become concolorous with the crown, or very nearly so. The illusion is probably due to the dominating large black bill and eye.

(v) *Tail* We have not noticed a difference in the tail pattern of the two species, but P. J. Hayman (1978), in his meticulous paintings, depicted Greater with more white on the sides of the tail than Lesser. A photograph of the Pagham bird by C. R. Janman shows a tail pattern similar to that of Greater, not Lesser.

(vi) *Call* We unfortunately do not know the call of Lesser Sand Plover. Sinclair & Nicholls (1980) likened it to that of a Turnstone, while merely mentioning that Greater 'utters a trill'. We know the call of Greater well and have repeatedly likened it to that of a Turnstone. One of us (ARK), in Mongolia in August 1979, also likened Greater's call to that of a Curlew Sandpiper *Calidris ferruginea*. The call we heard from the Pagham bird was the call we have learned to associate with Greater Sand Plover.

Ageing

Greater Sand Plovers may be aged by the extent of pale fringing on their wing-coverts (Prater *et al.* 1977): adults in winter plumage have narrow and relatively inconspicuous pale fringes to their coverts; juveniles have broad buff fringes to all their coverts, some of which are retained into first-winter plumage. Since the Pagham bird had all its coverts fringed buff, collectively forming a panel which was pale relative to the mantle, particularly noticeable in the early part of its visit, it was most probably a first-winter.

Distribution

Greater Sand Plover is a monotypic species which breeds on dry steppes in west and central Asia, east from Armenia through Transcaspia and Kazakhstan to eastern Mongolia; the continuum is broken midway by the Altai. In the last two decades, breeding has also been confirmed in Afghanistan, Jordan and Turkey (Nielsen 1971), which, taken in context with the increasing number of occurrences of individuals in Europe, suggests a possible southwesterly expansion of its range. It has a very large winter range, from the coasts of South Africa, East Africa, the Red Sea, the eastern Mediterranean, the coast of Arabia, the Persian Gulf, India, Indo-China, Australia, Greater and Lesser Sundas, and Micronesia to the Solomons (Nielsen 1971). It occurs on migration in Manchuria, Korea and Japan (Vaurie 1965).

There are at least 18 European records, involving at least 24 individuals, all since 1900 and six since 1970: Greece five (Watson 1961; Bauer *et al.* 1969), Malta four (Sultana *et al.* 1975, Sultana *in litt.*), Bulgaria (has occurred, but no details known: S. Cramp *in litt.*), Poland two (Glutz *et al.* 1975, S. Cramp *in litt.*), East Germany one, Belgium two (Glutz *et al.* 1975), the Netherlands one (de Heer 1979) and Sweden three (SOF 1978). July and September have been the favoured months.

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European news

This is the eighth of these six-monthly reviews of ornithological events in Europe. Records awaiting formal verification by national rarity committees are indicated by an asterisk (*).

Unless otherwise stated, all records refer to single birds

White-billed Diver *Gavia adamsii* POLAND
Fourth record: near Hel Peninsula, Władysławowo on Baltic coast, on 8th April 1979.

Red-necked Grebe *Podiceps grisegena* FRANCE
Only one adult summered in 1980 at 1978 breeding site southeast of Paris.

Sooty Shearwater *Puffinus griseus* MALTA
Third record: caught by fishermen off south-west in November 1979.

Night Heron *Nycticorax nycticorax* FRANCE
Northerly breeding: in 1979 and 1980, one to three pairs bred successfully in Eure-et-Loir, between Chartres and Dreux, 150 km farther north than Sologne breeding area (cf. first breeding in Belgium in 1979: *Brit. Birds* 73: 257).

Squacco Heron *Ardeola ralloides* DENMARK
Fifth record: Aggertange, North Jutland, on

14th-15th October 1979 (only previous records this century were in 1971 and in May 1979).

Little Egret *Egretta garzetta* FINLAND Second record: Valkeakoski on 11th May 1980*.

Great White Egret *Egretta alba* BELGIUM Dyle Valley near Brussels on one day in July 1980. DENMARK Five records in spring 1980 (first year with more than one record). FINLAND Eighth to eleventh records in 1980*. (Cf. recent breeding in the Netherlands and increase in records in Britain.)

Purple Heron *Ardea purpurea* FINLAND Fourth record: near Turku on 23rd June 1980*.

Black Stork *Ciconia nigra* BELGIUM Spring/summer records: during July 1979, in second half of June 1980 and on single days in May and July 1980 (cf. recent breeding in France: *Brit. Birds* 71: 255; 73: 257).

Glossy Ibis *Plegadis falcinellus* FEDERAL GERMAN REPUBLIC Ismaninger Teiche, Munich, during 5th-12th November 1977.

Spoonbill *Platalea leucorodia* ROMANIA Number of colonies and number of pairs both decreasing greatly in recent decades.

Bean Goose *Anser fabalis* AUSTRIA Unusually late spring records: flocks of 100-300 in Seewinkel, Burgenland, in first half of May 1980.

Red-breasted Goose *Branta ruficollis* FRANCE First record since 1962/63: two adults at Seine Reservoir during 24th February to 7th March 1979. ITALY Three with 1,800 Bean Geese *Anser fabalis* and 200 White-fronted Geese *A. albifrons* on Mezzano plain, Ferrara, in January 1980. SWEDEN Continues to occur increasingly often: seven times in 1979.

Shelduck *Tadorna tadorna* ITALY Usually rare on mainland, but 1,100 in winter 1978/79 and 2,200 in winter 1979/80 in Margherita di Savoia Salines nature reserve, Northern Apulia.

Wigeon *Anas penelope* BELGIUM First breeding: Turnhout in 1978 and 1979.

American Wigeon *Anas americana* NETHERLANDS Fourth record: male at Brouwersdam, Zuid-Holland, on 19th January 1980 (probably same bird in same area on three previous occasions since 1977: *Brit. Birds* 71: 255; 72: 590).

Falcated Duck *Anas falcata* BULGARIA First record: adult male at Tuzlata near Shabla, Tolbukhin, on 23rd February 1978. MALTA First record: shot in October 1979 (regarded as probable escape).

Shoveler *Anas clypeata* YUGOSLAVIA First confirmed breeding in Slovenia: pair with young near Ptuj in 1980.

Red-crested Pochard *Netta rufina* AUSTRIA Second breeding record this century in Neuseidler See area: three ducks with young on Illmitzer Zicksee in May-August; first record was in 1968 (cf. range expansion in Czechoslovakia, Poland and Switzerland: *Brit. Birds* 71: 583; 72: 276, 590).

Pochard *Aythya ferina* YUGOSLAVIA First breeding in Slovenia: few pairs near Ptuj in 1980 (cf. range expansion in Austria and Italy).

Ring-necked Duck *Aythya collaris* SWEDEN More than ever: five in 1979, in north and central Sweden (cf. 25 in Britain and Ireland in 1979).

King Eider *Somateria spectabilis* SWEDEN Wintering numbers no longer increasing (*contra* Steller's Eider).

Steller's Eider *Polysticta stelleri* POLAND First record of flock: 19, including one adult male, at Sopot, near Gdańsk, on 4th March 1979. SWEDEN Number wintering continues to increase, especially around islands of Öland and Gotland: 150 in Sweden in 1979.

Red-breasted Merganser *Mergus serrator* DENMARK Large crèche: 120 downy young with one female at Praestø, Zealand, on 2nd September 1979.

Goosander *Mergus merganser* CZECHOSLOVAKIA First proved breeding in north: female with six young at Drínovské jezero lake on 4th May 1977; also adults from 18th March to 5th September 1979.

Red Kite *Milvus milvus* SWEDEN In Scania, slow increase in numbers and range in last five to ten years, with about 50 pairs in 1979. Outside Scania, twice as many observations in 1979 as in previous years, perhaps heralding recolonisation. (Correction to *BWP* vol. 2 page 37: occurrence at 59°N has not existed for decades.)

Egyptian Vulture *Neophron percnopterus* FINLAND Fourth record: subadult in Värtsilä on 28th-29th May 1980*.

Pallid Harrier *Circus macrourus* NETHERLANDS Eighteenth record (second since 1966): male at Zuidelijk Flevoland on 12th June 1979 (cf. only four British and Irish records, all 1931-52).

Montagu's Harrier *Circus pygargus* DENMARK At least twice normal number in spring 1980. SWEDEN Continues to increase: in 1979, most suitable sites now occupied on Öland; three

pairs on Gotland; at least five pairs at mainland sites and many records of non-breeders in suitable habitat.

Bonelli's Eagle *Hieraetus fasciatus* CZECHOSLOVAKIA Seventh record: killed by high-tension wires in central Bohemia in May 1978.

Osprey *Pandion haliaetus* PORTUGAL Breeding confirmed for south and southern west coasts (two pairs) in 1979 and 1980.

Red-footed Falcon *Falco tinnunculus* DENMARK Influx: at least 19 in autumn 1979. FINLAND Invasion: 17 immatures in August-September 1979. SWEDEN Large influx: about 150 in late August 1979. (cf. invasion in Latvian SSR in July-August 1979: *Brit. Birds* 73: 258.)

Eleonora's Falcon *Falco eleonora* FRANCE Regular nearly every year, especially in spring, in Camargue/Iles d'Hyères/Sète area.

Saker *Falco cherrug* AUSTRIA Now extinct in alps of southeast Lower Austria: one pair bred successfully up to 1973, last seen there spring 1974. BULGARIA Family party with three juveniles in Western Stara Planina Mountains near Yugoslavian border on 21st June 1980.

Peregrine *Falco peregrinus* FEDERAL GERMAN REPUBLIC Increase: from 1966 to 1978, breeding population rose from 65 to about 85 individuals and successful cyries from nine to 18. SWEDEN Nine pairs of which seven reared 12 young in 1979 (13 young in 1978).

Spotted Crake *Porzana porzana* SWEDEN Special census in 1978 produced total of 254-258 calling males; minimum totals reported in other recent years: 312 in 1972, 217 in 1973, 129 in 1974, 207 in 1975, 240 in 1976, 184 in 1977 and 280 in 1979 (see *L'år Fågelvärld* 39: 237-245). Sweden is apparently the most important country for this species in western Europe, with an estimated 100-200 breeding pairs.

Allen's Gallinule *Porphyryla alleni* FINLAND First record: second-year in Joensuu on 10th May 1979.

Coot *Fulica atra* LATVIAN SSR Breeding numbers declined in each of past two years.

Crane *Grus grus* NETHERLANDS Strong spring passage in March-April 1980, especially in east.

Black-winged Stilt *Himantopus himantopus* ITALY Breeding numbers increasing. In winter: at least 30-40 wintered in 1979/80 in Stagno di Molentargius, Sardinia.

Avocet *Recurvirostra avosetta* ITALY First wintering of large flock on mainland: 110 in Margherita di Savoia Salines nature reserve in winter 1979/80. First successful breeding in southern mainland Italy: 20-25 pairs fledged at least 30 young in spring 1980 (cf. recent high wintering numbers in Portugal, high passage numbers in Denmark and colonisation of Norway: *Brit. Birds* 71: 255, 581; 72: 277, 581; 73: 258).

Stone-curlew *Burhinus oedipnemus* FINLAND Third and fourth records: Jurmo bird-station on 22nd-24th June 1979, and in Kiuruvesi during 15th-22nd June 1980*.

Kentish Plover *Charadrius alexandrinus* DENMARK Probably first winter record: Ølsemagle, Zealand, from 17th November to 9th December 1979.

Dotterel *Charadrius morinellus* AUSTRIA Only two successful pairs in Seetaler Alpen, Styria, in June 1980 owing to heavy snowfalls.

Lesser Golden Plover *Pluvialis dominica* POLAND Second record (first in 20th century): Nysa Reservoir, Opole province, southern Silesia, on 14th November 1979.

Spur-winged Plover *Hoplopterus spinosus* ROMANIA Dranov canal in August 1977.

Sociable Plover *Chettusia gregaria* ROMANIA Six on Litcov canal and Gorgova Lake, Danube Delta, in July 1977.

Baird's Sandpiper *Calidris bairdii* POLAND First record: Nysa Reservoir, Opole province, southern Silesia, on 21st August 1978.

Broad-billed Sandpiper *Limicola falcinellus* BELGIUM Inland: near Namur in May 1980.

Long-billed Dowitcher *Limnodromus scolopaceus* FINLAND First record: Jurmo bird-station on 15th May 1980*.

Marsh Sandpiper *Tringa stagnatilis* FINLAND Second breeding record: Uusimaa in 1978 (cf. first two breeding records in Latvian SSR in 1974 and 1975: *Brit. Birds* 72: 591).

Lesser Yellowlegs *Tringa flavipes* AUSTRIA Second record: Illmitzer Zicksee, Burgenland, on 25th October 1978.

Green Sandpiper *Tringa ochropus* YUGOSLAVIA First confirmed breeding: pair with downy young near Ptuj in 1980.

Terek Sandpiper *Xenus cinereus* AUSTRIA Fifth record: Rheindelta on 18th September 1979. BELGIUM Second record: Snaaskerke on 22nd June 1978. LATVIAN SSR First record: three at Lake Labānas in May 1980.

Grey Phalarope *Phalaropus fulicarius* DENMARK First spring record: adult male at

Skallingen, west Jutland, on 21st May 1979. FINLAND First winter record: Åland on 31st December 1979*.

Long-tailed Skua *Stercorarius longicaudus* DENMARK High numbers: eight or nine in September 1979 compared with about two in normal year.

Mediterranean Gull *Larus melanocephalus* ITALY Thousands (mainly adults) spend late summer and early autumn along Adriatic coast, especially in wetlands of Northern Apulia.

Franklin's Gull *Larus pipixcan* SWEDEN Second record: Scania in early August 1980.

Slender-billed Gull *Larus genei* ITALY Sardinian colony at Stagno di Cagliari with several hundreds of pairs is now threatened by construction of a harbour.

Audouin's Gull *Larus audouinii* FRANCE Breeding in Corsica: 27 pairs in 1979. ITALY Large colony, probably second-largest in world, discovered on island of Capraia, Tuscany: 60 pairs in 1978, 110 pairs in 1979.

Common Gull *Larus canus* LATVIAN SSR Colonisation of sites such as old piers in River Daugava in centre of Riga in recent years.

Glaucous Gull *Larus hyperboreus* SWEDEN Winter: over 30 observations in 1977/78 and about 60 in 1978/79 compared with four to 21 per year (usually about 15) during 1961-77.

Ivory Gull *Pagophila eburnea* SWEDEN Very few since 1930: 5th November 1979.

Sandwich Tern *Sterna sandvicensis* ITALY First breeding evidence: six pairs in colony of other terns and gulls at Comacchio Lagoon, Ferrara and Ravenna, in 1979 (cf. recent colonisation and range expansion in Estonian SSR and Poland: *Brit. Birds* 71: 256).

Arctic Tern *Sterna paradisaea* LATVIAN SSR First verified breeding: about 25 pairs in three colonies along Gulf of Riga in 1979 (two pairs but no nests found in 1972; one pair probably nested in 1978).

Brünnich's Guillemot *Uria lomvia* FRANCE First record: Finistère-nord on 21st April 1978.

Black Guillemot *Cephus grylle* CZECHOSLOVAKIA First record: on Elbe in central Bohemia on 17th February 1979. FRANCE Almost regular in autumn at Cap Gris Nez; four records in Brittany in winter 1979/80.

Great Spotted Cuckoo *Clamator glandarius* AUSTRIA Fifth record: Lauteracher Ried, Vorarlberg, on 1st May 1980. DENMARK Fourth record (first since 1957): Køge, Zealand, from 30th August to 3rd September 1979.

Ural Owl *Strix uralensis* BULGARIA Pair in central Stara Planina Mountains from 6th March to 11th April 1979 and 2nd-18th March and early June 1980.

Short-eared Owl *Asio flammeus* ITALY First breeding evidence in central Italy: nest with four young in Padule di Massaciuccoli, Tuscany, in 1979.

Tengmalm's Owl *Aegolius funereus* BULGARIA Breeding pair with three young at Gületchitsa in northern Rila Mountains from 21st March to 23rd August 1978. FRANCE First breeding in Massif Central: one pair in Puy-de-Dôme in 1979.

Pallid Swift *Apus pallidus* NETHERLANDS First record: Bath, Zeeland, on 8th August 1979* (cf. first British and Irish record in Kent in May 1978).

Alpine Swift *Apus melba* NETHERLANDS Ninth 20th-century record: Nijmegen, Gelderland, on 25th July 1979 (three up to 1972, five during 1973-76). SWEDEN First record: Nidingen in August 1980.

Little Swift *Apus affinis* MALTA Eighth record: May 1980.

Kingfisher *Alcedo atthis* SWEDEN Drastic decrease in 1979-80 as result of cold winters, particularly 1978/79.

Grey-headed Woodpecker *Picus canus* SWEDEN Perhaps increasing: one instance of confirmed breeding in census in 1973 (and only six reported during 1961-75), but 43 nests in 1976-79, including 17 in 1979; during same period, no comparable increase in nest-finds of White-backed Woodpeckers *Dendrocopos leucotos*.

Syrian Woodpecker *Dendrocopos syriacus* POLAND First records and first breeding: several in plum orchards at Trzciana, 15km west of Rzeszów, southeast Poland, since July 1978; two or three pairs in 1979, with young in nestholes found on 7th and 12th June (cf. range expansion in Czechoslovakia: *Brit. Birds* 71: 585).

Middle Spotted Woodpecker *Dendrocopos medius* LATVIAN SSR Second record: winter 1979/80.

Short-toed Lark *Calandrella brachydactyla* DENMARK Third or fourth record: Skagen, North Jutland, on 15th-16th May 1980.

Crag Martin *Ptyonoprogne fuligula* SWITZERLAND First nesting in Jura in 20th century: one pair at 750m near Mümliswil on 25th May 1980.

Meadow Pipit *Anthus pratensis* AUSTRIA Two more breeding sites found in 1980 in

Waldviertel, northwest Lower Austria (cf. *Brit. Birds* 71: 585).

Rock Pipit *Anthus spinoletta* SWITZERLAND
Brood reared at 610m near Reutigen: probably lowest Swiss breeding record.

Citrine Wagtail *Motacilla citreola* FINLAND
Sixth spring record: male in Kokkola on 8th May 1980*. SWITZERLAND First record: male at Les Grangettes on 30th April 1980*. (cf. range expansion in USSR: *Brit. Birds* 72: 42-43.)

Grey Wagtail *Motacilla cinerea* SWEDEN
Range expansion: one pair bred at Abisko (68°N), 1,200km north of northern limit of continuous distribution and 300km north of Ammarnäs where breeding has occurred for a few years; other records of breeding or presence between 60°N and 64°N also suggestive of marked range expansion (cf. first breeding in Estonian SSR and range expansion in Denmark: *Brit. Birds* 71: 256; 72: 279).

Waxwing *Bombycilla garrulus* AUSTRIA Small influx: east Lower Austria and Styria in January-April 1980, largest flock 250.

Thrush Nightingale *Luscinia luscinia* MALTA
Fifth record: ringed, from end September to 7th October 1979. NETHERLANDS Recorded annually in spring (two in May 1980) after probable breeding near Amsterdam in 1977 (only two previous records). SWEDEN Still increasing and expanding range on coast of south and central Sweden: now regular north to about 65°N (cf. increase and range expansion in Norway: *Brit. Birds* 70: 348-349).

Bluethroat *Luscinia svecica* DENMARK Influx: 29 ringed at Anholt Kattegat in May 1980, compared with usual maximum of five. SWITZERLAND First breeding of red-spotted *L. s. svecica* since 1927: one pair at Dischmas near Davos (cf. colonisation of Austria, Czechoslovakia and Romania: *Brit. Birds* 71: 585; 72: 592).

Black Redstart *Phoenicurus ochruros* FRANCE
See Redstart.

Redstart *Phoenicurus phoenicurus* FRANCE
Mixed pair, male Redstart × female Black Redstart reared brood in Somme in spring 1980; same pair plus a male Black Redstart reared second brood in July.

Swainson's Thrush *Catharus ustulatus* FRANCE
First sight record: near Versailles on 17th February 1979.

River Warbler *Locustella fluviatilis* BULGARIA
First breeding-season records: three singing males on Belene in Danube, 10km from Svishrov, on 27th June 1980 and two singing

males and empty nest near Garvan, Silistra, on 30th June 1980. SWEDEN Still increasing: annual since 1950 with total of over 500, including about 80 singing males in 1978 and about 100 in 1979, but no nest has yet been found (cf. increased numbers in Denmark in spring 1979: *Brit. Birds* 73: 260).

Savi's Warbler *Locustella luscinioides* SWEDEN
Still increasing: highest ever total of 16 singing males in 1979 (cf. colonisation of Estonian SSR and Latvian SR: *Brit. Birds* 71: 256; 72: 592).

Paddyfield Warbler *Acrocephalus agricola* FINLAND First record: trapped at Lågskär bird-station on 5th June 1980* (cf. Swedish record in summer 1979: *Brit. Birds* 72: 592).

Blyth's Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus dumetorum* DENMARK Second record: Skagen, North Jutland, on 7th July 1980 (first was in 1976).

Great Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus arundinaceus* SWEDEN Increasing: ten years ago, 20 singing males in one year considered good, but 200 reported in 1979, including 66 at Lake Tåkern.

Melodious Warbler *Hippolais polyglotta* SWITZERLAND Continuing range expansion in canton of Geneva: at least 15 territories near Verbois on 26th May 1980.

Barred Warbler *Sylvia nisoria* ITALY Breeding confirmed in northeast, in Forlì and Brescia, near Lake of Garda: at least 12 pairs in 1979. SWEDEN Breeds Öland and—local and rare—on Gotland and on east coast of southern Sweden; in 1977, new colony found on west coast near Strömstad, where eight males counted in 1979.

Greenish Warbler *Phylloscopus trochiloides* BELGIUM First record: caught Beerse on 7th October 1975. DENMARK Third autumn record: Christiansø, Bornholm, on 12th August 1979 (there have been many more in spring). FRANCE First definite record: Biguglia, Corsica, during 24th-31st December 1978 (but probably one Ushant, Brittany, in September 1973).

Pallas's Warbler *Phylloscopus proregulus* DENMARK About eighth to tenth records: three ringed at Christiansø, Bornholm, on 6th-7th October 1979.

Yellow-browed Warbler *Phylloscopus inornatus* BELGIUM Eighth record: one or perhaps two Oostduinkerke on 14th October 1979. MALTA Fifth record: ringed December 1979.

Dusky Warbler *Phylloscopus fuscatus* FEDERAL GERMAN REPUBLIC First and second records: Helgoland on 21st October 1977 and, as

noted previously (*Brit. Birds* 72: 280), Oststeinbek, Hamburg, on 21st November 1977.

Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus collybita* DENMARK First and second winter records: Zealand on 30th December 1979 and 2nd January 1980.

Firecrest *Regulus ignicapillus* FINLAND Second record: Rönnskär bird-station during 6th-10th October 1979.

Sombre Tit *Parus lugubris* YUGOSLAVIA First confirmed breeding in Slovenia: two pairs feeding young near Koper in 1980.

Azure Tit *Parus cyanus* FINLAND First record since 12 observations in 1973-77 invasion: Helsinki on 2nd December 1979.

Penduline Tit *Remiz pendulinus* PORTUGAL Wintered annually since 1975; of 33 ringed, one controlled building nest in Sweden (Sado Estuary, Portugal, on 26th January 1979 to Krankesjön, Sweden, on 26th April 1980).

Isabelline Shrike *Lanius isabellinus* FINLAND First record: singing male in Kokkola during 11th-13th May 1980*.

Lesser Grey Shrike *Lanius minor* BELGIUM First since 1971: near Bastogne, Ardennes, in mid June 1980.

Great Grey Shrike *Lanius excubitor* DENMARK Practically none seen during 1979/80.

Raven *Corvus corax* BELGIUM First natural breeding in Ardennes since 1919: three young reared, after reintroduction during past several years.

Brambling *Fringilla montifringilla* LATVIAN SSR, Singing male in east in June 1980 (at least four previous instances of singing males or nests found).

Siskin *Carduelis spinus* SWITZERLAND Very numerous in winter 1979/80: numerous flocks in German part of Switzerland and canton of Wallis in January, and even more in February (largest flock, 500 at Alpnach on 16th February), decreased by mid April; many observers reported that they had not seen so many for years.

Linnet *Carduelis cannabina* FAEROE ISLANDS Pair at Tvöroyvi on Suuroy in May 1980.

Pine Grosbeak *Pinicola enucleator* FEDERAL GERMAN REPUBLIC Female or immature at Steinhuder Meer, Lower Saxony, on 17th December 1978.

Rustic Bunting *Emberiza rustica* FEDERAL GERMAN REPUBLIC Male at Ismaninger Teiche, Munich, on 25th May 1977.

Rose-breasted Grosbeak *Phaeothicus ludovicianus* MALTA First record: immature in October 1979.

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Mystery photographs

48 A medium-sized or largish wader is wading at the edge of a pool. Knowing that almost any species could occur, the first thoughts are aimed at identifying the genus or group of species. The size and relatively long straightish bill instantly indicates the larger *Tringa* species—Greenshank *T. nebularia*, Spotted Redshank *T. erythropus* or Greater Yellowlegs *T. melanoleuca*—or the godwits *Limosa*. The *Tringa* species have a distinctive feeding action which has its basis in the detection of food by sight. The bill is therefore fine or tapered to a point. This bird's bill has a fairly broad terminal third, and even its tip is slightly rounded, leading one towards the godwits, which probe into mud. The distinctive leg colours of *Tringa* species are a useful further distinction from godwits, but this cannot be used here. It is often important to attempt to determine the age of waders in the field, because diagnosis of the age of an individual wader can greatly aid the identification process for some difficult pairs or groups of species. In this case, the general freshness and neat uniform patterning of the coverts and scapulars clearly indicate juvenile plumage. On this bird, there is very little strongly contrasting white or grey on its underparts, and the coverts and scapulars have broad, pale notches and edges (rather than a neat pattern of pale spots): these are clear features of a juvenile godwit rather than a juvenile *Tringa*.



The most useful points for distinguishing between standing Bar-tailed *L. lapponica* and Black-tailed Godwits *L. limosa* (when the totally diagnostic

281. Adult winter Bar-tailed Godwit *Limosa lapponica*, Cork, winter 1974 (Richard T. Mills)



wing- and tail-patterns cannot be seen) are bill shape, the proportionately longer legs of Black-tailed (especially the distance between the 'knee' and the body), the upper breast and neck pattern, and (on juveniles only) the covert and scapular markings. Here, the bill is long, but not disproportionately so, and is slightly but clearly upturned. Fine dark streaks abound on the pale background of the upper breast and neck, and the broad pale notches and edges on the coverts and scapulars (giving a pattern recalling that of a Curlew *Numenius arquata*) lead one straight to the Bar-tailed Godwit. The barred outer tail feather showing beneath the wing-tip also confirms the identification. The bill of Black-tailed Godwit is straight and longer, the breast and neck virtually unstreaked (cinnamon on juveniles or grey in winter), and on juveniles the more uniformly fringed coverts and scapulars give a neat scaly pattern recalling that of a juvenile Ruff *Philomachus pugnax*.

The original photograph (plate 273, repeated here at reduced size), taken by Dr K. J. Carlson in Suffolk in September 1979, shows a juvenile Bar-tailed Godwit. Juveniles have the striking covert and scapular pattern, while in the adult non-breeding plumage (plate 281) these feathers grade relatively evenly from a dark centre to pale edges. Like other waders, juvenile head and body feathers are replaced by first-winter plumage in a moult during the first autumn: first-winter birds are ageable until at least January by the retained scaly juvenile wing-coverts.

A. J. PRATER



282. Mystery photograph 49. Name the species. Answer next month

Notes

Unusual nest sites of Teal in Northumberland

Of four nests of Teals *Anas crecca* found in Northumberland in 1978 and 1979, three were in crag situations, a type of site not mentioned either in *The Handbook* or in *BWP*. The first, found on 13th May 1978, containing nine eggs, was on a ledge on a crag forming one side of a gorge on a stream flowing through Wark Forest. The vegetation on the ledge was mainly bilberry *Vaccinium myrtillus*, and the ledge was approximately 1 m from the top and 10 m from the base of the crag. On 25th June, one addled egg and a number of eggshells indicated successful hatching. This particular ledge is a traditional nesting site of Kestrels *Falco tinnunculus* and, on the latter visit, a Kestrel's nest containing three small young was found within 1 m of the Teal's nest.

On 8th July 1978, a second nest was found on top of a crag overlooking a stream in Kielder Forest; it was situated among heather *Calluna vulgaris* some 11 m above the stream bed and contained one addled egg, but again eggshells showed that young had hatched. A nest was located on this same crag on 10th June 1979, but on a ledge about 1 m from the top. This site too has been used by Kestrels, and the only vegetation on the ledge was some rosebay willowherb *Epilobium angustifolium*. On this occasion, one addled egg and the remains of six hatched eggs were in the nest.

The fourth nest, found on 21st June 1978, containing only hatched eggshells, and with the duck giving a distraction display close by, was perhaps in a more typical site: on top of a large boulder, covered in heather, at the downstream end of a waterfall gorge on the same stream as the first nest. Even this nest, however, was sited on the edge of a sheer drop of some 2 m.

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Unexpected behaviour of Sparrowhawk In September 1978, on Cape Clear Island, Co. Cork, as I was walking a grassy path between bracken *Pteridium aquilinum*, I flushed a young male Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus* about 5 m away. Instead of flying off in the usual way, it rose about 1½ m in the air, then fluttered to the ground, trailing a wing. It did this three times before eventually making off. I then noticed at my feet a small pool of feathers and the three-quarters-eaten body of a Robin *Erithacus rubecula*.

R. S. THOMAS

Y Rhiw, Pwllheli, Gwynedd

Dr Ian Newton has commented that he has never heard of anything like this before; we should welcome any comparable observations. EDS

Mutual cartwheeling by Kestrels The note by John Dawson (*Brit. Birds* 71: 220) recalled the following. At 10.00 GMT on 7th May 1977, at Swanley, Kent, I witnessed the aerial display of a pair of Kestrels *Falco tinnunculus*. It was largely as described in *The Handbook*, the male circling above and



around the female, and the two frequently coming together and 'looping the loop'. Usually, when they came together it was without incident, the pair diving from an apical position and moving off separately from the bottom of the dive. On many occasions, however, the female turned on to her back and both raptors extended their talons; sometimes the talons interlocked briefly, which once caused the two to cartwheel in the manner described by Mr Dawson for Sparrowhawks *Accipiter nisus*. At 18.00 that evening, and again the following morning, I noted the same display. On 8th August 1977, in Golan, Syria, I noticed Kestrels displaying in the same way, again with the female turning on her back at the male's approach, with talons extended. This time there were one, or possibly two, recently fledged young in the area.

I considered this display to be a kind of ritualised and degraded version of the food-pass.

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A letter commenting on cartwheeling by raptors appears on page 589. EDS

Hovering as hunting technique of Hobby B. D. Harding suggested (*Brit. Birds* 71: 189) that hovering is a much commoner method of feeding or flight behaviour of the Hobby *Falco subbuteo* than has been hitherto documented. On 10th June 1978, near Exeter, Devon, D. R. Damant and I watched a Hobby passing over an area of open heathland. At three stages, it stopped, turned, and hovered for between 20 and 40 seconds at a height of about 50m. On the third occasion, it dived to the ground, but was then no longer in view and was not seen again. Presuming that this Hobby dropped to the ground to take prey, this behaviour would seem similar to that recorded by Iain Robertson (*Brit. Birds* 70: 76-77). The day was bright, but cold with a slight wind; so far as I could see, very few insects were on the wing, but there was an abundance of insect life on the ground. It may be that the Hobby occasionally adopts this technique of feeding, taking prey on the ground when food in the air is scarce.

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We consider that this habit has been adequately described; the subject is, therefore, now closed. EDS

Aerial feather-shaking by raptors In the late afternoon of 20th December 1974, at Beulah, near Newcastle Emlyn, Dyfed, Miranda Forrest and I observed a tiercel Peregrine *Falco peregrinus*, which was flying casually about 50m from and almost directly above us, shake his feathers before continuing in the same direction. On 16th August 1978, near Trelech, Dyfed, I watched a Buzzard *Buteo buteo* hurriedly take off from a telegraph pole and feather-shake in mid air almost immediately. Dr N. C. Fox (verbally) has observed such behaviour by both the New Zealand Falcon *F. novaezeelandiae* and the Australian Harrier *Circus approximans gouldi* and noted that it is often associated with aerial defecation. This behaviour is probably fairly widespread among raptors.

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Aerial feather-shaking is common in several groups of birds, but is often poorly documented. EDS

Greater Sand Plover in Avon At about 14.00 GMT on 17th November 1979, CJN was in Sutton Wick Hide on the east shore of Chew Valley Lake, Avon, examining a flock of 60 Dunlins *Calidris alpina* feeding on a mud spit some 300m away, when he noticed a larger wader, clearly a 'ringed' plover *Charadrius*, on drier mud behind them. Before it disappeared behind some reeds, he noted pale brown back colour and an incomplete breast band. Kentish Plover *C. alexandrinus* was considered unlikely in view of its size, so he assumed that he had probably obtained poor views of a Ringed Plover *C. hiaticula*; nevertheless, he decided to try to obtain a closer look. At 14.15 hours, however, he met KEV in nearby Spring Bay and mentioned the bird to him. KEV immediately became suspicious, since, although Ringed Plovers are common autumn passage migrants at the lake, they are very rare after the end of October. CJN quickly relocated the bird, and KEV, as soon as he had obtained a good telescope view, identified it as a Greater Sand Plover *C. leschenaultii*. After an initial period of excitement, we settled down and watched it for ten minutes before it again disappeared behind the reeds. Moving back to the hide, we met R. M. Curber and a team of duck-counters. In company with them, we watched it until 16.20, when it flew off north and disappeared. The following day, a large number of observers gathered, and the bird eventually reappeared in late morning. It remained at Chew until 10th February 1980 and was seen by many hundreds of birders during its three-month stay.

In a distant view, it appeared to be a large 'ringed' plover. Both plumage and structure recalled a giant female or winter-plumaged Kentish Plover, having rather a similar 'chick-like' shape due to a short looking rear end. It always appeared rather hunched, with its head sunk well into its shoulders (plates 283 & 284). It looked paler than Ringed Plover, being more similar in shade to Kentish, the plumage generally appearing pale grey-brown and white, with noticeable brown breast patches. Other features included: white forehead and supercilium, brown ear patch, pale shawl over nape (replacing the white collar of Ringed or Kentish) and noticeably pale wing-coverts. Perhaps the most obvious single feature, however, was a quite large, thick, black bill. The legs were long and dark, giving a proportionally taller appearance than either Ringed or Kentish. In flight, it looked a medium-sized wader with a noticeable white wing-bar and a pale fawn rump. The following detailed description was obtained after several hours of close-range views.

SIZE, SHAPE AND STRUCTURE Distinctly large 'ringed' plover, but exact size not always apparent, especially if no other small waders present for direct comparison; it often, therefore, seemed smaller than it really was. Conjectural size comparisons with Ringed Plover somewhat erroneous because of distinctly different shape. Direct comparisons with Dunlin frequently possible: judged to have been about a quarter as big again; it was, however, tall-looking, and top of the back of a feeding Dunlin only just reached lower border of breast patches. Shape very

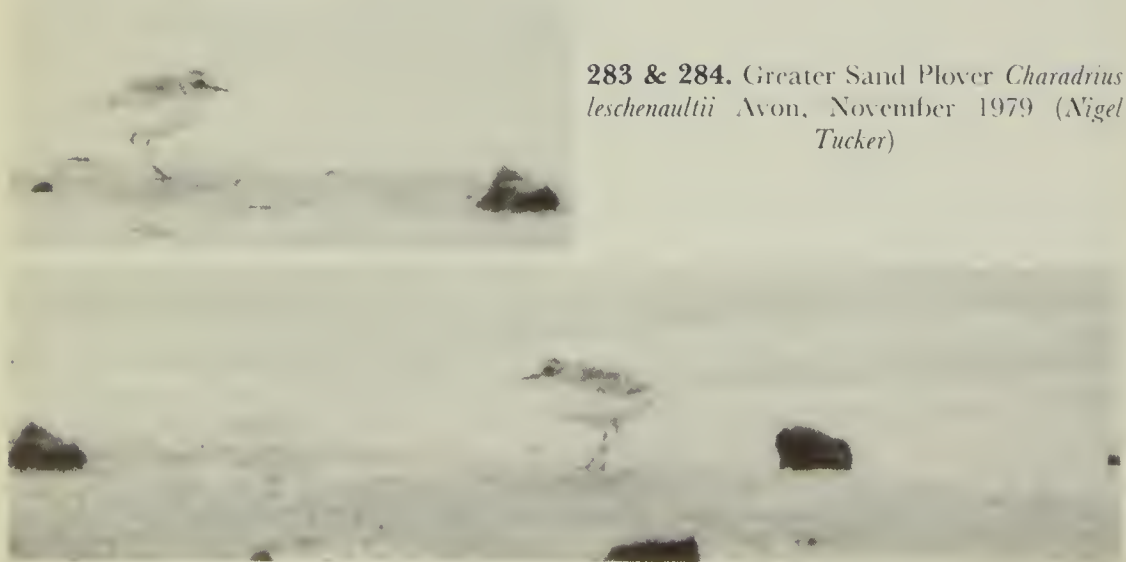
distinctive: crown well rounded (in fact at times line of back practically level with line of crown); rear end looked short, almost chick-like at times, but this appearance perhaps due to legs being set well back, about two-thirds of way along body, producing rather heavy-fronted appearance. Length of legs similar to depth of body at maximum. 'Knees' only just below level of belly feathering and tarsus always noticeably inclined. One of most distinctive features was bill, which usually looked quite long and heavy, especially if silhouetted against pale

background. Noticeably long for a 'ringed' plover (about half head-length), and in direct comparison, surprisingly similar in length to bill of Lapwing *Vanellus vanellus* (cf. measurements in Prater *et al.* 1977). Bill quite thick, tapering towards tip, which, although pointed, appeared relatively blunt-ended from distance. Lower mandible gently inclined upwards from gonys to tip, but no bulge whatsoever at gonys. Slight bulbous effect to tip of upper mandible sometimes apparent in very close view.

PLUMAGE AND BARE PARTS Crown grey-brown, sometimes producing slight capped effect from distance; faint paler feather edgings visible at close range. Forehead white, with slight creamy tint, merging slightly into crown. Forehead extended back to form narrow creamy-white or buffy-white supercilium, tapering behind eye. Supercilium narrowest above eye and some slight brown flecking immediately above and in front of eye. Narrow grey-brown line from bill across lores, broadening to form large ear patch, faintly darker in shade than crown or back. Narrow dark line extended up from top corner of ear-coverts into pale fawny nape, which formed noticeable pale shawl between crown and upper back, replacing white collar of Ringed or Kentish. Shawl and lack of collar best appreciated when bird stretched up preening. Narrow whitish orbital ring, obvious only below eye and apparent only at close range. Underparts entirely white, but prominent grey-brown lateral breast patch, recalling winter-plumaged Kentish Plover, extended down from upper mantle and was very slightly darker in shade than back. Breast patches pointed, with upper edge

gently curved, following contour of body, tapering towards lower edge, which bulged prominently. Very narrow grey connecting line joined breast patches, looking almost like pencil line; this often not apparent or appeared incomplete, but best seen at close range when bird totally at ease with head hunched well into shoulders. Back cold grey-brown, paler than Ringed, with very faint, narrow, pale feather edgings at point blank range. Line of faintly paler feathers (narrowly edged paler still) along upper edge of scapulars. Scapulars faintly darker than back, feathers having dark mesial line and very narrow pale edges. Median coverts noticeably paler than back and scapulars, producing large pale panel across closed wing. Feathers of median coverts basically arranged in three rows, the feathers themselves being pale fawn, with dark mesial line and perhaps very vaguely paler towards edge; noticeably worn and abraded in comparison with rest of plumage, producing less even, scruffier appearance to coverts. Small feathers of lesser coverts, around carpal region, faintly darker with clearer cut pale edges. Slightly darker line along lower border of closed wing caused by darker feathers underlying wing-coverts, but conspicuousness of this varied according to attitude of bird. Greater coverts and tertials faintly darker than median coverts, with fairly well-defined pale edges. Tertials almost totally covered primaries, which projected only 1-2 mm beyond them. Tail not visible at rest. Two or three long white undertail-covert feathers frequently fluffed up over tail/wing tips to produce noticeably white looking area from distance. Eye large and dark, appearing black. Bill generally

283 & 284. Greater Sand Plover *Charadrius leschenaultii* Avon, November 1979 (Nigel Tucker)



appeared black, but, at very close range, very faint fleshy tint apparent along area of cutting edge, but culmen and tip definitely black. Very faint short dark line visible at close range on either side of lower mandible. Legs greyish, but exact shade difficult to discern, appearing fleshy-grey, greeny-grey or even yellowy-grey, depending on light.

DESCRIPTION IN FLIGHT Looked larger than Dunlin: a medium-sized wader. Wings narrow and shortish; flight sometimes appeared similar to Ringed Plover with easy action, but at other times wings not raised above horizontal and bowed downwards on downstroke, producing fluttery action prompting comparisons with Common Sandpiper *Actitis hypoleucos*. Often glided, especially when landing. Conspicuous white wing-bar, which, when wing-stretching, appeared to be formed by prominent white tips to greater coverts and conspicuous white bases of inner primaries. Primaries black, with noticeable white shafts at close range. Tail appeared

grey-brown, perhaps similar to back, with dark line down centre and narrow pale edgings and tips to individual feathers at close range. Outer tail feathers appeared totally whitish on outer webs at least. Undertail largely covered by long undertail-coverts, but appeared pale brown except for outer feathers, which were totally pale. Uppertail-coverts/rump noticeably pale in flight, appearing pale fawn (perhaps similar in shade to nape), with thin dark central line, like tail; individual feathers narrowly edged pale at close range. Underwing and axillaries appeared largely white.

CALL Frequently heard in January and February, especially in flight. A short, liquid trill with downward deflection at end. Vaguely reminiscent of Turnstone *Arenaria interpres*, but perhaps more similar to trill of Long-billed Dowitcher *Limnodromus scolopaceus*, being 'thinner' in quality than Turnstone's.

Comparisons with Lesser Sand Plover *C. mongolus* were rather difficult, owing to lack of relevant literature and photographs; this species, however, was eliminated mainly on: (a) size, (b) extent of wing-bar, (c) size of bill and (d) tail pattern. The Chew bird seemed to be virtually identical to the one at Pagham Harbour, West Sussex, the previous winter.

During November and early December, the sand plover's favourite spot was a small promontory at Sutton Wick, an area of slightly harder mud which is often favoured by autumn Ringed Plovers. It would feed along the shoreline, but equally often well up from the water's edge, but avoiding the encroaching short grass towards the top of the bank. Feeding actions were typically plover-like, but possibly somewhat slower and more deliberate than those of Ringed Plover. It would occasionally run at speed along the shore, reminiscent of the occasional runs of Kentish Plover or even Sanderling *Calidris alba*. It appeared to feed on very small food items, which were sometimes briefly held in the bill tip before swallowing; on occasion, it would wash slightly larger prey in the water, as had the Pagham individual the previous winter. It invariably fed on its own, but not infrequently wandered into a feeding flock of Dunlins. When disturbed, it would sometimes join the Dunlins in flight and it occasionally accompanied Lapwings, but more often it took an independent line; it would sometimes crouch low on the mud when the Dunlins were put to flight. It was quite tolerant of people, allowing approaches to within 10-15m, and in January it often fed near a picnic site apparently oblivious to people nearby. It was much more concerned with avian predators such as Buzzard *Buteo buteo*, Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus* and Peregrine *Falco peregrinus* and when threatened it would crouch horizontally with its feathers sleeked and look skywards in an agitated manner. On one occasion, it crouched and very slowly eased up and hid behind a large stone. Only once was it seen to bob when nervous. On 18th November, it and all the other waders in the area

were put to flight by an adult Peregrine. While all the other waders flocked high in the air, the sand plover soon became separated from the rest; it was then observed to glide and even hang in the air, often in one spot, with its wings slightly depressed below the horizontal.

It was assumed that the sand plover would leave the lake at the first sign of cold weather, or when rising water levels reduced the available habitat (other wintering waders, such as Dunlins and Green Sandpipers *Tringa ochropus*, usually move on in mid winter). This was not to be, however, and it proved to be remarkably adaptable for a bird which should really have wintered on the shores of the Indian Ocean! During late December and early January, it moved to the north end of the lake, near the Main Dam, and began associating much more with Lapwings, which it had largely ignored earlier. It attached itself quite firmly to the Lapwing flocks and tended to remain with them, even when disturbed by avian predators.

In the late afternoon, it roosted with the Lapwings on one of two mud spits. It sometimes fed along the few remaining stretches of muddy shoreline, but more often fed with the Lapwings in the adjacent grassy fields. It remained right through January and survived some spells of severe cold and even snow. In late January and early February, it moved to the west side of the lake, frequently feeding with Lapwings in a large damp field during the morning and roosting in short vegetation in one of two bays, where it sometimes associated again with the few remaining Dunlins, during the afternoon. Having survived the harshest part of the winter, it was last seen during a mild spell in February, when most of the Lapwings began to leave the area.

This record constitutes the second for Britain and Ireland, closely following the first in West Sussex from December 1978 to January 1979 (see pages 568-573).

C. J. NEWMAN and K. E. VINICOMBE
28 Canynge Square, Clifton, Bristol BS8 3LB

REFERENCE

PRATER, A. J., MARCHANT, J. H., & VUORINEN, J. 1977. *Guide to the Identification and Ageing of Holarctic Waders*. BTO Guide 17. Tring.

Identification of Greater and Lesser Sand Plovers Plates 121 and 126 (pages 208 and 212) both show Greater *Charadrius leschenaultii* and not Lesser Sand Plovers *C. mongolus*. We apologise for these errors. EDS

Great Black-backed Gull towing food item ashore On 6th October 1978, from the footpath near Old Town Church looking down into Old Town Bay, St Mary's, Isles of Scilly, my wife and I noted a first-year Great Black-backed Gull *Larus marinus* attempting to seize and control a shining white floating object approximately 40-50cm long and 20cm at its widest. It appeared to be a dead fish, but the distance, and the brilliant sunlight reflected from the object, precluded certain identification. The gull was trying to bite at the object at several places along its length, but without success, as each time the gull touched it the floating object bobbed below the surface. After several minutes, the gull moved to what appeared to be the head end of the object, which was then pointing shorewards, grasped the tip in its bill and began to tow it ashore. At this time it was about 10m

from the water's edge, with its back to the land. Using its half-opened wings for balance—and possibly to some degree for propulsion (although its body never lifted from the water)—the gull appeared to be swimming backwards. The construction of a gull's legs and feet are such that it would seem unlikely that direct backward swimming propulsion would be possible. The tide was rather low, so the gull's fully extended legs may have enabled its feet to touch the bottom, thus pushing it backwards. After only a few minutes, the gull succeeded in towing the item, about 12-15 cm thick, to the edge of the water, where it became stranded, with most of its thickness above the surface. The gull was then able to stand firmly and peck at the presumed dead fish, which was now lodged in place and no longer sinking with every peck.

I have discussed this incident with several friends familiar with the behaviour of large gulls, and none has seen anything similar. A. C. Bent (*Bull. US Nat. Mus.* 113: 111) mentioned the opposite behaviour, in which Herring Gulls *L. argentatus*, walking backwards, dragged dry fish from the upper beach to the water, either to wash off sand and dirt or to soften the flesh by maceration. Just as gulls drop molluscs on to hard surfaces, this towing behaviour suggests a certain intelligence in that the bird performed an action that caused a potential, but currently unusable, food item to become available. Gulls regularly feed opportunistically on stranded marine animals, but in this instance the stranding was deliberately accomplished by the gull itself, after unsuccessful attempts to feed on the floating object. The unusual and rather clumsy backward locomotion of the gull in the water, and the fact that the gull 'knew' that its problem would be solved by stranding the food object on the shore, are both notable.

KENNETH C. PARKES

Carnegie Museum of Natural History, Pittsburgh, Pa 15213, USA

Continuing immigration of Collared Doves P. F. Bonham's note (*Brit. Birds* 71: 221) prompts me to record further evidence for the continuing immigration of Collared Doves *Streptopelia decaocto*. Between about 16.00 and 19.00 GMT on 10th May 1978, on board the Plymouth-Santander ferry in the English Channel approaches north of Finistère, I saw groups of five, two and a single Collared Dove approach from approximately south, circle the ship several times, and leave northwards.

COLIN R. TUBBS

Nature Conservancy Council, Shrubbs Hill Road, Lyndhurst, Hampshire SO4 7DJ

Reaction of Great Spotted Woodpecker to partially albinistic Blackbird On 5th December 1978, in a mixed deciduous wood above Colwyn Bay, Clwyd, I saw a partially albinistic Blackbird *Turdus merula* apparently being pursued by a male Great Spotted Woodpecker *Dendrocopos major*. The Blackbird had two large white oval shoulder patches and a very small white patch on each carpal joint. When the Blackbird reached dense cover, it started tossing leaves in the usual feeding manner. The woodpecker, which was close behind the Blackbird until it reached the cover, flew up and landed on a bough; it then dropped quickly into the cover and, after a few seconds, emerged and flew away. Since the Blackbird had a top aspect similar to that of a Great Spotted Woodpecker, particularly with the white

shoulder patches, the woodpecker might perhaps initially have mistaken the Blackbird for its own species, but, after reassuring itself, continued feeding. No alarm calls were uttered by either bird.

P. I. MORRIS

C/o Welsh Mountain Zoo, Colwyn Bay, Clwyd

Aggressive behaviour of Sand Martins to partial albino On 1st September 1963, at Thorney Island, West Sussex, I saw a partial albino Sand Martin *Riparia riparia*; its body was normal, but both wings were white, with a small amount of brown flecking. It attempted to land on the mud beside other Sand Martins, but was promptly driven off by two of them. Its repeated attempts to return were similarly thwarted; even when it approached flying martins, it was driven off. This is the only example of aberrant hirundine of which I have any notes. I had taken the behaviour described as normal until I read P. J. Roberts's note on Storm Petrels *Hydrobates pelagicus* (*Brit. Birds* 71: 357). I then reflected that I have frequently seen partially albino Blackbirds *Turdus merula* and a few pale House Sparrows *Passer domesticus*, but none was ever subjected to persecution by any other bird.

D. A. C. MCNEIL

44 Sandown Road, Leicester

Magpie killed by nylon fishing-line I read with interest the item 'Nylon fishing-line' (*Brit. Birds* 71: 370). On 19th August 1978, in Sutton Park, Tamworth, my mother and I found a dead Magpie *Pica pica*, with its wing and leg firmly entangled in nylon fishing-line, hanging in a tree. Peter Holden (*in litt.*) reports that this is the only instance of a Magpie being killed by this method which has been noted in the special projects on the subject of bird deaths due to nylon fishing-line carried out by the Young Ornithologists' Club.

PAUL PALMER

Langland, 28 Albert Road, Tamworth, Staffordshire

Letters

Albinos being chased by conspecifics With reference to P. J. Roberts's note on Storm Petrels *Hydrobates pelagicus* chasing an albino, and Derek Goodwin's comment (*Brit. Birds* 71: 357-358), my observations of various bird species and of brown hares *Lepus capensis* lead me to agree that albinos are generally ignored by members of their own species, but I should like to offer a possible explanation for the incidents concerning both the petrel and the Oystercatchers *Haematopus ostralegus*. Normal individuals of both species have distinctive white flashes visible only in flight. In the case of the highly gregarious Oystercatcher, the wing-stripe and tail undoubtedly serve to hold flocks together; the effect on other Oystercatchers of the sudden appearance of these white markings is to cause them to take flight and follow. It is arguable that the function and effect of the Storm Petrel's white rump is similar. Thus, an individual with identical size, shape and movements, but with an apparently exaggerated white flash, may give rise to an exaggeration of the 'following instinct', which could be interpreted as pursuit or even aggression.

LAURENCE N. ROSE

Lonsdale College, University of Lancaster, Bailrigg, Lancashire

Derek Goodwin has commented as follows: 'While white or bright areas of plumage that are suddenly exposed, or are made more conspicuous when their owner takes wing, sometimes (not always) elicit a following response in conspecifics, I do not think that an *entirely* white individual could supply a supra-normal *suddenly exposed* white area. The Oystercatchers I described were not flying with the white one; they attacked it when it tried to join them.' Eds

Cartwheeling by raptors I was most interested to read the account of mutual cartwheeling by a pair of Sparrowhawks *Accipiter nisus* (*Brit. Birds* 71: 219-220). Cartwheeling is what falconers used to call 'crabbing', and is a common occurrence if by chance two hawks of the same sex are flown together. In former days, when a cast of tiercels was flown together, elaborate precautions were taken and they were kept side by side in the mews. Merlins *Falco columbarius* always behaved more amenable. I have also several times seen Kestrels *F. tinnunculus* cartwheeling when invading each other's territory on cliffs, and have seen an adult tiercel Peregrine *F. peregrinus* cartwheel with an immature that invaded his territory in the breeding season.

DICK TRELEAVEN

Blue Wings, South Petherwin, Launceston, Cornwall

We also heard from Mrs Rebecca and Julian Woodell, who observed spiralling and possible talon-grappling between Sparrowhawks, apparently of different sexes, on 3rd August 1975, in Buckinghamshire (see *Bird Life* May-June 1976, p. 15), and Laurence N. Rose (see note on pages 581-582). Eds

Identification of Blyth's Reed and Paddyfield Warblers The *Acrocephalus* warbler in plate 197 in *Brit. Birds* vol. 72, although labelled as Blyth's Reed *A. dumetorum*, clearly shows the relatively stubby bill shape, dark-bordered, distinct supercilium and relative tail to wing tip positions of Paddyfield *A. agricola*. The photographer, Dr Stuart L. Pimm, has commented that 'it is possible that I labelled the slide carelessly, noting only the apparent small supercilium. The supercilium on closer inspection appears to be long and broad and this would clearly reject *dumetorum*.' Although the forepart of the supercilium has caught the light, the actual extent is indeed obvious, and is useful confirmation of the value of this character noted by Dr J. T. R. Sharrock (*Brit. Birds* 72: 596).

DAVID BRITTON, P. J. GRANT and W. G. HARVEY

44 Kirkleatham Avenue, Marske, Cleveland

Birdwatchers in the New Forest From time to time in *British Birds* there have appeared references to the behaviour of birdwatchers which have varied from being highly critical to being complacently self-congratulatory. In the New Forest, there have been few past occasions when it was felt that real damage was being done, but the experiences of 1980 have been more worrying. Through the courtesy of your columns we wish to draw attention to sustained mass irresponsibility of birdwatchers in the Forest during the spring and early summer of 1980 and to make a plea for more responsible behaviour.

From May onwards, parts of the New Forest were inundated by visiting birdwatchers, many coming by the coachload. In two localities, a number

of the territories of pairs of Dartford Warblers *Sylvia undata* were repeatedly trampled by crowds of up to 60 people at a time and the Dartfords at one site had to endure the invasion of their territories by three coachloads in one day. At another site, the last pairs of Red-backed Shrikes *Lanius collurio* sustained similar intensive and repeated disturbance. Other examples involving other species could be quoted. At a favoured watching point, a Bronze Age barrow has received significant surface damage which will inevitably trigger off further erosion by animals and weather.

On private property, there is a reasonable chance of controlling birdwatchers' behaviour. In the New Forest, where access is virtually unrestricted, it is much more difficult. It is certainly beyond the present resources of the Forestry Commission keepers, despite the blatant illegality of disturbing Schedule 1 species. None of the bodies involved in the conservation and management of the Forest has any desire to embark on expensive wardening programmes, but we make a plea to all those who visit the area to conform to an acceptable standard of behaviour. One major consideration should be to keep to the clear main paths and not crash through undergrowth trying to find birds: they will, after all, usually show themselves to the patient observer. In particular, we ask the organisers of ornithological society programmes to consider if the visit is really desirable. Perhaps a general rule in this context should be that no coach party should go to a site where rare (i.e. on Schedule 1 of the Protection of Birds Act) birds breed, unless the site is a wardened reserve. Sustained disturbance, even by individuals, can be as serious a threat to the birds' success as is egg-collecting. Should a visit take place, leaders must insist on discipline and a reasonable code of conduct from the participants.

COLIN R. TUBBS and A. J. PRATER

Colin R. Tubbs, Assistant Regional Officer (South), Nature Conservancy Council, Shrubbs Hill Road, Lyndhurst, Hampshire SO4 7DJ, and A. J. Prater, Regional Officer (South East), RSPB, Scan House, 4-8 Church Street, Shoreham by Sea, West Sussex BN4 5DQ

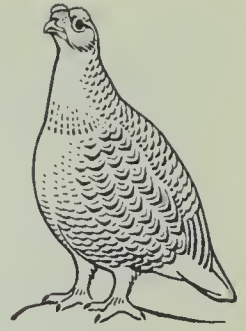
Announcements

Bill Oddie's Little Black Bird Book Order your copy from *BB* and you will help our finances; the publishers will send you a copy post free. Cheques or postal orders (payable to British Birds Ltd) for £4.95 to Bill Oddie's Book, Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3NJ.

Birdwatcher's Yearbook 1981 This compendium of useful information is reviewed on pages 603-604. Order your copy from *BB* and you will help our finances. Cheques or postal orders (payable to British Birds Ltd) for £5.45 (£4.95 + 50p p & p) to Birdwatcher's Yearbook, Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3NJ.

Postal auction of cover design Usual arrangements (see *Brit. Birds* 73: 485).

Sponsored by



We are delighted to announce that this annual competition will now be sponsored by Matthew Gloag & Son Ltd, proprietors of 'The Famous Grouse' scotch whisky. *British Birds* will continue to run the competition and the rules will be the same as in previous years:

Up to three colour transparencies, each taken during 1980, may be submitted by each photographer. They will be judged on originality and scientific interest, as well as technical excellence. Preference will be given to photographs taken in Britain and Ireland, but those of species on the British and Irish list taken elsewhere are also eligible. A brief account (not more than 200 words) should be enclosed with each, giving the circumstances in which obtained, the method used, technical details (focal length of lens and make of camera and film), locality, date and photographer's name and address. Transparencies will be returned only if accompanied by a suitable SAE.

We hope that the judging panel will comprise Dr R. J. Chandler, Eric Hosking, Michael W. Richards, Dr J. T. R. Sharrock and Don Smith.

Past winners of this competition have been Michael C. Wilkes (1976), Peter Lowes (1977), Dr Edmund C. Fellowes (1978) and Don Smith (1979). Their prizes (cheques for £100 and engraved salvers) were presented at London Press Receptions by Sir Peter Scott, Mrs Joyce Grenfell, Bill Oddie and Jellery Boswall. The 1980 award (cheque for £100 and engraved Red Grouse trophy) will be presented to the winning photographer by a well-known personality at a similar ceremony in London. The runners-up will be welcome to attend the award presentation.

The closing date for entries is 31st January 1981. Transparencies should be clearly marked 'Bird Photograph of the Year' and sent to the editorial office at Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK43NJ.

Frontiers of Bird Identification The publishers of *Frontiers*, Macmillan London Ltd, have notified us that copies are currently not available from them; they hope to have new stocks early in 1981: an announcement will be made in *British Birds*.

Requests

Stithians Semipalmated photographs wanted We hope to publish a selection of photographs to show the identification points of the Semipalmated Sandpiper *Calidris pusilla* which was present at Stithians Reservoir, Cornwall, from early September 1980. Photographers are invited to submit their best shots for possible inclusion: black-and-white prints are preferred, but colour slides can be considered for conversion. They should be sent to Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK43NJ.



Wandlebury warbler photographs wanted Photographs of the *Hippolais* warbler which frequented Wandlebury, Cambridgeshire, for several weeks from 16th June 1980 could help the discussion as to whether it was an Icterine *H. icterina* or a Melodious Warbler *H. polyglotta*; a selection of the best pictures will be published. Photographs and opinions (with reasons) of the identity of the bird should be sent to Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3NJ.

Raptor migration survey in Israel The Israeli Raptor Information Centre plans to conduct a survey on raptor migration through the Rift Valley between 16th February and 11th May 1981 and help is being sought from British and other European ornithologists.

Participation in the survey is under the condition that the person spends two weeks watching, one at Ein Gedi on the edge of the Dead Sea and the other at Elat at the top end of the Gulf of Aqaba. Provided the response is sufficient, observers will work in groups of four with three additional Israeli observers.

Accommodation will be provided at nearby field study centres, where showers and a self-service kitchen are available. A small cost of £1.50 will be charged per day, and the money used for raptor conservation projects in Israel. For those who are interested, arrangements will be made for a two-day hike in the Judean Desert and the Elat area.

Anyone wishing to participate should write to the organiser, Yossi Leshem at ARIC, Har Gilo Field Study Centre, Sak Na'ul, Jerusalem, Israel, giving preferred dates. Anyone wishing to learn further details first should contact Richard Porter, c/o RSPB, The Lodge, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 2DL.

Diary dates

This list covers events taking place during January to December 1981. We welcome submission of details for possible inclusion in the next list, covering July 1981 to June 1982.

9th-11th January BTO RINGING AND MIGRATION CONFERENCE. Hayes Conference Centre, Swanwick, Derbyshire.

13th January BRITISH ORNITHOLOGISTS' CLUB. Stanley Cramp OBE on 'Ornithology and conservation in Europe'. Central London. Non-members should write (enclosing SAE) to hon. secretary, R. E. F. Peal, 2 Chestnut Lane, Sevenoaks, Kent TN13 3AR.

31st January Closing date for entries for 'Bird Photograph of the Year'.

7th February RSPB FILM PREMIERE. Royal Festival Hall. 3 p.m. and 7.30 p.m. Details from RSPB, Film Show Organiser, The Lodge, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 2DL.

3rd March BOC. Professor G. M. Dunnet on 'Thirty years of Fulmars'. Central London. Information from hon. secretary.

6th-8th March ALL-IRELAND CONFERENCE. Jointly organised by the RSPB and the Irish Wildbird Conservancy. The Slieve Donard Hotel, Newcastle, Co. Down. Details from RSPB Northern Ireland Office, Belvoir Park Forest, Belfast BT8 1QT.

17th March-19th May YOUNG ORNITHOLOGISTS' CLUB MIGRATION PHONE-IN. Telephone Sandy (0767) 80551, Tuesdays only, 5 p.m.-7.30 p.m. Records from adults welcomed.

27th-29th March RSPB MEMBERS' WEEKEND. University of York. Full details from RSPB Conference Organiser.

27th-30th March BOU ANNUAL CONFERENCE. Glasgow. Applications to Meetings Secretary, BOU, c/o Zoological Society of London, Regent's Park, London NW1 4RY.

31st March Closing date for entries for 'Best recent black-and-white bird-photographs'.

31st March Closing date for entries for 'Bird Illustrator of the Year'.

4th May YOC ANNUAL SPONSORED BIRD-WATCH.

Late May (provisional) THE WILDFOWL TRUST AGM.

3rd-14th August (provisional) SOCIETY OF WILDLIFE ARTISTS' ANNUAL EXHIBITION. The Mall Galleries, The Mall, London SW1. Open 10-5 Mon.-Fri.; 10-1 Sat.

23rd-25th October SCOTTISH ORNITHOLOGISTS' CLUB ANNUAL CONFERENCE & AGM. Marine Hotel, North Berwick, East Lothian. Applications to Club Secretary, SOC, 21 Regent Terrace, Edinburgh EH7 5BT.

21st November JOINT BOU/MAMMAL SOCIETY ALL-DAY MEETING. Zoological Society of London, Regent's Park. 'Predator-prey interactions between birds and mammals.'

Applications to Dr J. Gurnell (Mammal Society), Zoology Department, Westfield College, Queen Building, London NW3 7ST.

28th-29th November or 5th-6th December NATIONAL EXHIBITION OF CAGE AND AVIARY BIRDS.

4th-6th December BTO ANNUAL CONFERENCE & AGM. Hayes Conference Centre. Applications to BTO.

News and comment

Peter Conder and Mike Everett

Well done Malta! Summer 1980 saw the introduction of dramatic new legislation in Malta, for so long the black spot of the Mediterranean for bird of prey slaughter. Between 22nd May and 31st August, it is now illegal to shoot any bird; outside these dates, certain species may be shot: wildfowl, certain waders, pigeons and doves and, unfortunately, herons, egrets, thrushes (except Rock Thrush) and Dotterel. Even so, this goes much further than even the most ardent Maltese conservationist had hoped for, and gives complete protection to birds of prey. Huntable species may be killed only by licensed shooters, of whom there are some 12,000 (with possibly as many unlicensed), all operating on the 830 square kilometres of the island complex. Enforcement will no doubt be a problem, but we can congratulate Malta on a major step forward and also boast that, at long last, every European country has comprehensive legislation protecting birds of prey. (Contributed by Richard Porter)

Suffolk BOPs East Anglian birders, and the many raptor-tickers who visit the area in winter, will welcome the appearance of *Birds of Prey in Suffolk, 1973-1978*, a comprehensive status report from the Bird of Prey Survey of the Suffolk Ornithologists' Group and the forerunner of an annual series. Copies are available from Bird of Prey Survey, 22 Spriteshall Lane, Felixstowe, Suffolk IP11 9QY, price £1.25 including postage (cheques to Suffolk Ornithologists' Group please).

Estonian migration booklet Since we see relatively little material from the Baltic

States, it is particularly pleasing to welcome the appearance of an English translation of *Methods of Studying Visible Bird Migration* by Prof. Dr E. Kumari of the Academy of Sciences of the Estonian SSR Baltic Commission for the Study of Bird Migration. Essentially a practical handbook for field workers, it gives a good summary of the history of its subject to date and much useful information on methods to follow. We have no details of price and availability at the moment.

Border birds What do birdwatchers do when they live around the borders of two or more counties and want to send in their records? Those on the Surrey/Hampshire line at least can now contribute to a single report, which, incidentally, seems to take in bits of Berkshire and West Sussex too! The *7th Hants/Surrey Border Bird Report*, covering 1979, has now appeared and is available (price 90p plus 40p p & p) from J. M. Clark, 4 Upper St Michael's Road, Aldershot, Hampshire GU11 3HA.

North Sea report The first *North Sea Bird Watch Annual Report*, covering 1979, has just appeared, detailing the first year's results of Phillips Petroleum's North Sea Bird Watch from various platforms and rigs in the area. As well as containing some interesting records of seabirds, it includes details of an amazing variety of migrant landbirds: 96 species are mentioned in all, probably the oddest being a Tawny Owl *Strix aluco*. Let us hope this is just the first of a whole series of reports from the North Sea—oil may be of some use to us after all!

French guides Birdwatchers visiting France might like to know of an excellent series of guides to French National Parks, varying from 18F to 40F in price, available from Atelier de Recherche des Parcs, 18-bis, rue Gaultier de Biauzat, Clermont-Ferrand, who will gladly supply more details on request. Not all are ornithological in content, but three which we have seen—on the birds of prey of the Parc Naturel Régional des Volcans d'Auvergne, on the birds of the Corsican park and an 'atlas' of Brittany—are extremely good.

Bird Census Work and Nature

Conservation The proceedings have now been published of the combined 6th Conference of the International Bird Census Committee and the 4th meeting of the European Ornithological Atlas Committee held at Göttingen, Federal German Republic, in September 1979: 42 contributions, 300 pages, 145 figures, 73 tables, and five photographs. This useful publication is obtainable for DM25 (cheques payable to Dachverband Deutscher Avifaunisten) from DDA-Schriftenversand, Rosenwinkel 7, D-3325 Lengede, FDR.

Cornwallis Memorial Lecture The late Dick Cornwallis will be remembered with affection by many older readers, 'officially' perhaps as the co-author of *The Bird in the Hand* and the *Birds of Lincolnshire*, and affectionately for many reasons: at bird conferences he would swing the conversation round to his other passion, cricket, given the slightest excuse, and he derived great amusement from the fact that he wrote a major paper on Waxwing invasions before the species was even on his life-list! Now, the Lincolnshire Bird Club has honoured his memory by instituting a Cornwallis Memorial Lecture in their annual programme: the first, in October 1980, was, appropriately (since Dick was a farmer), 'Birds on Farmland' by the BTO Director, Raymond O'Connor.

Jordan trip In addition to the list of tours published in the October issue (73: 482) James Morris Travel, 64 Westbourne Grove, London W2 5SH tell us of a birdwatching tour through Jordan in April 1981, visiting the classic birding sites, including Azraq, Shaumari, Petra and Aqaba as well as some antiquities. A wide range of birds is expected, and the leader is... Peter Conder.

Edgardo Moltoni The recent death of Prof Edgardo Moltoni leaves a large gap in Italian ornithology. If he was a dedicated and somewhat retiring man, also unfortunately monolingual, and therefore perhaps one of the least known of his country's great ornithologists, he also did a vast amount to revitalise Italian ornithology and will be remembered as one of those with prime responsibility for its present healthy state. For half a century, he was Director of the Natural History Museum in Milan and Editor of the *Rivista Italiana di Ornitologia*. He wrote nearly 400 papers, as well as four volumes on the birds of Italian East Africa and thoroughly revised Martorelli's *Uccelli d'Italia*. (From contribution by G. Buzzard)

Roger Tory Peterson honoured Everybody knows the name of Roger Tory Peterson. Even though most of us will probably never meet him, we all owe him a great deal as the pioneer of the modern fieldguides we now take so much for granted; many still feel that the one with his illustrations is the best of all. It is pleasing to record, then, that he was one of 14 people from all walks of life to receive the Medal of Freedom, the USA's highest civilian award, at the White House in June this year.

New recorder for Isle of May The new Secretary of the Isle of May Bird Observatory and local recorder for the island is Bernard Zonfrillo, 28 Brodie Road, Glasgow G21.

Watch those plants! Lynne Farrell of the Botanical Society of the British Isles has asked us to include a plea on behalf of rare plants. There is a growing movement among birders to 'tick' and to photograph rare plants, but they are not always as careful as they should be—including over where they put their feet. Please, then, exercise the greatest caution when visiting vulnerable sites and looking at rare and endangered plants: and ask yourself if your visit is really necessary... there are some sites that should be avoided. We all expect botanists to be careful at rare bird sites, so let's co-operate with their codes of conduct too.

ABNHPS Conference The Association of British Natural History Photographic Societies held its biennial conference at

Leeds University on the weekend of 19th September 1980. It was attended by about 80 delegates, mainly 'residents', and on the Friday and Saturday evenings there were slide-shows of the highest calibre—so much so that the President of the International Federation of Wildlife Photography, Jean-Fabius Henrion from France, was moved to state that he regarded the exhibition as the best he had ever seen. Howard Ginn of the Nature Conservancy Council and Peter Robinson of the RSPB both gave talks on the attitudes of their respective organisations towards nature photographers and were then bold enough to face a volley of questions afterwards: both sides acquitted themselves well. The next convention of the Association will be held at the Charles Morris Hall on the weekend of 24th September 1982. (Contributed by Don Smith)

Peregrine problems 1981 will be an interesting year where Peregrines *Falco peregrinus* are concerned: the national survey organised by Derek Ratcliffe will bring us up-to-date on the recovery of the species and its present numbers. What is just as important to many people is that we may see the new provisions of the proposed Wildlife and Countryside Bill become law before the

next breeding season. The Bill will, we hope, go through Parliament this winter, and among its many new provisions there will be a comprehensive licensing and registration system covering the taking and, most important, the owning of wild birds of prey, which will hopefully plug some of the large loopholes in the present laws. Not before time, life will become very much more difficult for the obviously large 'pirate fringe' of the falconry fraternity, many of whom operate with near impunity at present—or are at least very hard to catch and bring to book. It seems as if they decided to have a last fling in 1980: the RSPB knows of at least 40 nests which were pillaged this year, with the young 'disappearing' in many cases . . . a few of the villains will be appearing in court in due course, but by no means all of them. No fewer than 17 confiscated Peregrines were in the RSPB's hands at one point last summer. Unfortunately, most of these have had to remain in captivity pending the outcome of court cases, but the whole sickening tale did at least have its brighter side too. RSPB staff were able to take four young birds, taken from two eyries, to the Highlands, where they were placed singly in nests where there were young of a similar age: all four fledged successfully.

The opinions expressed in this feature are not necessarily those of the editors of British Birds

Recent reports

K. Allsopp and R. A. Hume

These are unchecked reports, not authenticated records

Unless stated otherwise, all dates refer to September.

The first half of the month was dominated by westerly winds, often very strong in the west, especially on 12th and 13th. From 18th, an anticyclone developed over Europe, bringing easterly air opposing the westerlies, the fronts dividing the air masses becoming slow-moving over the North Sea and Western Europe. A few Continental migrants were grounded when the more active of these fronts crossed British east coast areas overnight. With the winds predominantly from the south, temperatures remained warm until the end of the month.



285. Roller *Coracias garrulus*, Suffolk, September 1980 (J. Miller)

Waders

The numbers of the commoner passage species were generally low, with only small parties of **Little Stints** *Calidris minuta* and **Curlew Sandpipers** *C. ferruginea* being reported from coastal areas. The exception was **Spotted Redshank** *Tringa erythropus*, with some quite sizeable flocks gathering on East Anglian marshes. With the weather conditions favouring a fast transatlantic passage, the reported arrivals of Nearctic waders have been exceptional, the vast majority coming from western localities. The

most numerous, as in other exceptional years, were **Buff-breasted Sandpipers** *Tryngites subruficollis*. The earliest reports were from Ireland, with ten, including four at Tacumshin (Wexford) from 6th, followed by eight on the Isles of Scilly on 10th and a single at Cheddar Reservoir (Somerset) on 7th. More were found after the gales on 13th, with one inland at Blithfield Reservoir (Staffordshire), three on the Lizard (Cornwall), where there were four on 17th, five at Lisagriffin (Cork), and singles at Pennington (Hampshire) on 13th, Chew Valley Lake (Avon) on



286 & 287. Wilson's Phalarope *Phalaropus tricolor*. Cornwall, September 1980 (J. B. & S. Bottomley)



16th, Teesmouth (Cleveland), and Fair Isle on 18th, Bunaclogge Bay (Kerry) on 20th and Davidstowe (Cornwall) on 23rd. Showing a similar pattern of arrivals and nearly as numerous were **Pectoral Sandpipers** *Calidris melanotos*. Most of the earlier reports were from Ireland, with seven up to 8th, and also two at Chew Valley Lake on 7th, and singles at Lyng (Norfolk) and Cresswell (Northumberland) on 6th. After 13th, ten singles were reported in England, mainly in the West Country, and a further ten in Ireland, including three at Ballycotton (Cork) on 13th. The next most numerous were **Wilson's Phalaropes** *Phalaropus tricolor*, with eight reports from Ireland (three together at Belfast Lough) and six singles in England (plates 286 & 287). Six more **White-rumped Sandpipers** *Calidris fuscicollis* were added to the autumn's total, with singles at Bann Mouth (Derry) on 6th, Duncrue Street Marsh (Antrim) on 9th and Dungeness (Kent) on 14th, followed by three at Teesmouth on 5th October. A **Semipalmated Sandpiper** *C. pusilla*, found at Stithians Reservoir (Cornwall) on 12th and still there on 25th, attracted many observers eager to see this sometimes difficult to identify species. Two others had been reported earlier, at Tacumshin on 6th and at Ballycotton on 7th, and there was a third Irish report later, from North Bull Island (Dublin) (plate 288). Ireland again sent early reports of **Baird's Sandpiper** *C. bairdii*, at Ballykelly (Derry) on 31st August, at Tacumshin on 6th, 10th and 13th, and at Ballycotton on 7th, while, in Cornwall, later reports were from the Lizard on 21st and at Davidstowe on 22nd. **Lesser Golden Plovers** *Pluvialis dominica* arrived from the middle of the month, with singles at Lisagriffin on 14th, Ballycotton on 16th, Drift and St Just (Cornwall) on 25th, at

288. Juvenile Semipalmated Sandpiper *Calidris pusilla*, Dublin, September 1980
(Ronan Hurley)



Davidstowe and near Falmouth on 5th October. Further species involved in the invasion were **Spotted Sandpipers** *Actitis macularia*, at Drift on 10th, inland at Draycote Reservoir (Warwickshire) on 12th and at Sandbach (Cheshire) on 14th, **Lesser Yellowlegs** *Tringa flavipes* at Stithians Reservoir on 25th and on the Isles of Scilly, and two **Killdeers** *Charadrius vociferus*, at Bull Island (Dublin) on 1st and at Keyhaven (Hampshire) on 28th. With the westerly gales, **Grey Phalaropes** *Phalaropus fulicarius* might have been expected, but only one was reported, from Lodmoor (Dorset) on 12th. From the east, the only unusual wader records were of a **Great Snipe** *Gallinago media* on the Out Skerries (Shetland) and six, possibly eight, **Kentish Plovers** *Charadrius alexandrinus* at Dungeness on 21st, one at Ferrybridge (West Yorkshire) on 20th and two at Sandwich Bay (Kent) on 20th.

Seabirds

Last month's deluge of shearwaters in the west was not sustained, the only sizeable movements were of 1,000 **Great Shearwaters** *Puffinus gravis* at Cape Clear (Cork) on 4th, 126 **Sooty Shearwaters** *P. griseus* at Bardsey (Gwynedd) on 12th and over 200 at St Ives (Cornwall), with a single Great Shearwater, on 13th. A few **Leach's Petrels** *Oceanodroma leucorhoa* were also seen on that day there, but, farther north on the Wirral (Cheshire), the gales brought over 100 to inshore waters, while, out in the Irish Sea, only three were seen off the Calf of Man. The last locality, however, had been well favoured earlier on 5th when visited by an adult **Bridled Tern** *Sterna anaethetus* and by an unusual passage of skuas for the Calf on 12th, with 23 **Great Stercorarius skua**, 15 **Arctic** *S. parasiticus*, two **Pomarinus** *S. pomarinus*, and a single **Long-tailed** *S. longicaudus* to complete the set. Bardsey also reported unusually large skua movements. A further record of Long-tailed Skua came from Spurn (Humberside) on 21st. **Sabine's Gulls** *Larus sabini*, however, were the most obvious seabirds affected by the westerlies, with 21 reported off the Irish coast, including six at Cape Clear. In the Bristol Channel area, there were singles at Steart (Somerset), at New Passage (Avon), and at Chew Valley Lake (Avon), all on 13th, and one on the Axe Estuary (Avon/Somerset) on 14th. One was seen at the Wirral, three at Bardsey and two at St Ives again on 13th, followed by two at Weymouth (Dorset) on 17th and three at Portland (Dorset) on 26th. From the east,

White-winged Black Terns *Chlidonias leucopterus* were seen at Thurrock (Essex) on 12th, the Wirral on 19th, Sutton Bingham Reservoir (Somerset) on 23rd and Stithians Reservoir on 25th. A **Whiskered Tern** *C. hybridus* was a good find at Draycote Reservoir on 12th.

Landbirds

A **Yellow-billed Cuckoo** *Coccyzus americanus* on the Isles of Scilly on 29th and a **Black-and-white Warbler** *Mniotilta varia* on Skomer (Dyfed) on 20th were the only Nearctic arrivals. A few surprising vagrants from the east were reported during the period of westerlies, the most unusual being a **Yellow-breasted Bunting** *Emberiza aureola*



at Berrow (Somerset) on 13th (not at Fair Isle, the usual haunt, where, however, one was reported earlier, on 10th), while others included **Citrine Wagtails** *Motacilla citreola* at Ballycotton on 7th and Sumburgh (Shetland) on 17th, an **Isabelline Wheatear** *Oenanthe isabellina* at Bamburgh (Northumberland), and an **Arctic Warbler** *Phylloscopus borealis* on Fair Isle on 11th. Most arrivals occurred around 21st, when easterly winds with extensive misty conditions predominated over the North Sea. **Red-breasted Flycatchers** *Ficedula parva* were found at Bradwell (Essex) on 17th, at Spurn and Hauxley (Northumberland) on 21st, at Wells (Norfolk) on 28th and there were two on the Isles of Scilly. **Bluethroats** *Luscinia svecica* arrived at Dungeness and Spurn on 21st, and later on the Isles of Scilly. **Tawny Pipits** *Anthus campestris* were unusually numerous on the English south coast, with six at Beachy Head (East Sussex) and one at

Dungeness on 21st, and singles at Porthgwarra (Cornwall) on 25th and Portland on 26th and twos at St Just and on the Isles of Scilly on 28th. Two **Richard's Pipits** *A. novaeseelandiae* had reached the Isles of Scilly by the end of the month, and **Red-throated Pipits** *A. cervinus* were found on Fair Isle on 20th and 23rd. Among the warblers of note were another **Arctic Warbler**, again on Fair Isle, on 21st, **Bonelli's Warblers** *Phylloscopus bonelli* at Portland and at Aberdeen on 23rd, two **Yellow-browed Warblers** *P. inornatus* at Wells and one in Orkney on 28th, and several on the Isles of Scilly, **Icterine Warblers** *Hippolais icterina* at Bamburgh and the Lizard on 20th, and Dungeness and Hauxley on 21st, **Barred Warblers** *Sylvia nisoria* at Lodmoor on 14th and at Spurn and Portland on 21st, two **Aquatic Warblers** *Acrocephalus paludicola* on the Lizard on 21st and a **Savi's Warbler** *Locustella luscinioides* at Beachy Head, again on 21st. Fair Isle recorded its usual annual vagrants, with four **Rustic Buntings** *Emberiza rustica* and two **Little Buntings** *E. pusilla* during the month, **Short-toed Larks** *Calandrella brachydactyla* on 21st and 23rd and eight **Scarlet Rosefinches** *Carpodacus erythrurus* over this period; the latter species also turned up at Spurn on 21st and Beachy Head on 24th, and there were two in Orkney. The vagrant species from the south which do arrive in westerly weather were fairly well represented: **Melodious Warblers** *Hippolais polyglotta* arrived on the Calf of Man on 17th, Portland on 20th, Porthgwarra (Cornwall) on 14th, Fair Isle on 22nd, and Benfleet (Essex) on 24th, with several on the Isles of Scilly; **Woodchat Shrikes** *Lanius senator* were seen at Dungeness on 13th and on the Lizard on 21st; and **Hoopoes** *Upupa epops* were reported from Beachy Head (two on 21st), the Isles of Scilly (one on 13th) and at Orpington (Greater London) from 11th to 17th (plate 289). Other notable records from

289. Hoopoe *Upupa epops*, Greater London, September 1980 (R. J. Chandler)



the Isles of Scilly were of a **Rose-coloured Starling** *Sturnus roseus* during the month, a **Sardinian Warbler** *Sylvia melanocephala* on 25th, a **Fan-tailed Warbler** *Cisticola juncidis* on 28th, and an **Isabelline Shrike** *Lanius isabellinus* on 4th October. Three **Rollers** *Coracias garrulus* were also found, at Redisham (Suffolk) (plate 285), on the Ouse Washes (Cambridgeshire) on 17th and at Dover (Kent) on 8th.

Ducks and crakes

The same **Black Duck** *Anas rubripes* which wintered at Rogerstown (Dublin) had returned by 8th. Three **Blue-winged Teals** *A. discors* were found, two near Droitwich (Worcestershire) on 6th October and one at Wadebridge (Cornwall) on 2nd October, and two **Ring-necked Ducks** *Aythya collaris*, one at Stithians Reservoir on 14th and the

other on the Isles of Scilly at the end of the month. Three **Spotted Crakes** *Porzana porzana* was an unusual find on the Wirral on 19th, and another was reported from Marazion (Cornwall) on 20th. A **Corncrake** *Crex crex* at Spurn on 21st was a rare East Coast record these days.

Latest news

In early November, spate of **Pallas's Warblers** *P. proregulus*, with singles at Scarborough (North Yorkshire), Spurn, Sittingbourne (Kent), Prawle Point (Devon), and two at Waxham (Norfolk) and six at Sandwich Bay; **Dusky Warbler** *P. fuscatus* at Dungeness; **Desert Wheatear** *O. deserti* on Gower (West Glamorgan); **Bonelli's Warbler** on Scilly; second **Pine Bunting** *E. leucocephalos* (a male) and **Olive-backed Pipit** *A. hodgsoni* on Fair Isle.

Short reviews

Devil Birds: the life of the Swift. By **Derek Bromhall**. (Hutchinson, London, 1980. 96 pages; 33 colour plates; many black-and-white plates. Hardback, £8.95; paperback, £5.95.) Readable account of the natural history of the Swift by someone who spent much of the summers of 1976 and 1977 filming at the colony in the tower of the University Museum at Oxford which was made famous by David Lack's *Swifts in a Tower*; illustrated by relevant (and often magnificent) photographs. **Survival in the Wild: the adventures of a film maker in Africa.** By **Cindy Buxton**. (Collins, London, 1980. 102 pages; 18 colour plates. £5.95.) Highly readable; sections on Shoebill *Balaeniceps rex* especially interesting. **Bird Atlas of Natal.** By **Digby Cyrus and Nigel Robson**. (University of Natal Press, Pietermaritzburg, 1980. 320 pages; 530 black-and-white line-drawings; 530 distribution maps. £15.00.) Bird-distribution in the South African province of Natal based on fieldwork during 1970-79, with splendidly clear maps showing presence in each of the 12 months of the year for each of the 166 quarter-degree grid 'squares' (for which standard maps are available). A total of 530 species is mapped. Each also has a line-drawing by Tony Clarkson, usually four or five lines of text on world distribution (breeding and wintering) and then two or three lines on habitat within Natal. Nicely produced; a model which, hopefully, birdwatchers in other areas within the African continent will emulate. **Basil**

Ede's Birds. Text by **Robert Dougall**. (Severn House, London, 1980. 128 pages; 70 colour illustrations. £9.95.) Produced as a vehicle for Basil Ede's bird-portraits. Not aimed at the twitcher or the biologist, but at bird-lovers and fans of Basil Ede's work. By fostering the enjoyment of birds, such books undoubtedly play their role in conservation. **The Guinness Book of Woodland Birds.** By **Michael Everett**. Illustrations by **R. A. Hume**. (Guinness Superlatives, Enfield, 1980. 160 pages; 50 colour plates; 58 line-drawings; 50 distribution maps. £3.95.) Thoroughly competent little book written for beginners and covering 50 common woodland species with a single colour photograph, a line-drawing by Rob Hume, a map showing distribution within the United Kingdom and a short text for each species. The introduction gives sound general advice on birdwatching. **Nature Detective.** By **Hugh Falkus**. (Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1980. 256 pages; numerous black-and-white plates; £2.95.) Fascinatingly crammed with photographs of traces of animals (including birds) which can be found in the British countryside. A nice book for browsing, which will inevitably lead to several exclamations of 'I've seen that! I didn't realise it was made by a . . .'. **Vanishing Birds: their natural history and conservation.** By **Tim Hallyday**. (Penguin Books, Harmondsworth, 1980. 296 pages; 16 colour plates; 46 black-and-white line-drawings; nine maps. Paperback £2.50.) Paperback version of this

excellent book, reviewed previously (*Brit. Birds* 71: 543). **Children of the Wing: a study of Swallows.** By Raymond Howe. (Moonraker, Bradford-on-Avon, 1980. 68 pages; four colour illustrations, nine black-and-white line-drawings. £4.95) Story book for, perhaps, the eight- to 12-year-old. At one stage 'Ariel', the 'daughter of "Cumulus" and "Cirrus"', was caught in a mist-net and 'endured the agony' of examination and ringing . . . **Birds of Mountain Regions.** By Lars Jonsson. (Penguin Nature Guides, Harmondsworth, 1979. 132 pages; many colour illustrations. £1.95) This fourth of the series of five small guides should be purchased by all active birdwatchers: the bird portraits are painted by one of the world's supreme bird artists whose ornithologist's eye catches not only the essential plumage characteristics and the species' jizz, but also, quite frequently, wholly new or frequently overlooked identification points. The series arrangement (by habitats rather than by systematic sequence) still annoys and the text is not of the same quality or reliability as the paintings (Citrine Wagtails nesting in Scotland, for instance), but this fourth is just as much a 'must' as were the previous three (see reviews in *Brit. Birds* 71: 595-596; 72: 496). **The Hawaiian Goose: an experiment in conservation.** By Janet Kear and A. J. Berger. (T. & A. D. Poyser, Calton, 1980. 156 pages; one colour plate; 24 black-and-white plates; several line-drawings. £9.00.) A splendidly readable and interesting account of the decline, captive breeding and re-introduction; well illustrated and attractively designed. My only regret is that *Branta sandvicensis* is referred to as the Nene (which, to me, is a river flowing from Northamptonshire into The Wash and pronounced 'neen') rather than the Ne-ne or the Néné, pronounced 'nay-nay'. Wildfowl-watchers, wildfowl-breeders and conservationists will all welcome this monograph-cum-history of an interesting bird whose fate is still in the balance. **Collins Bird Guide: a photographic guide to the birds of Britain and Europe.** By Stuart Keith and John Gooders. (Collins, London, 1980. 764 pages; 613 colour plates; over 400 range maps. £5.95.) All the photographs are at the front and all the text at the back. Many of the photographs would be useful for reference, but some reproduction is mediocre and the colours are sometimes garish, which could be very misleading to a beginner; other plates are excellently reproduced. Extraordinary

shape (19 × 9½ × 3 cm). Nearly all bird books do good, by encouraging an interest in ornithology, but this one is no substitute for Peterson, Mountfort & Hollom (1974, *A Field Guide to the Birds of Britain and Europe*) or Heinzel, Fitter & Parslow (1972, *The Birds of Britain and Europe with North Africa and the Middle East*). It claims to have 'more than twice as much text as any other standard European field guide', but it is not always helpful and, when difficult identifications are involved, it seems to give up; neither new identification criteria nor advances in technique are apparent. It will be a pity if beginners opt for this rather than for Collins's other very useful field guides.

Rook. By Deborah King. (Hamish Hamilton, London, 1980. 25 pages; 13 colour illustrations. £3.95.) Biology in 12 stages through the year for the seven- to 11-year-old, with a page of large print facing an appropriate colour painting. **The Island.**

By Ronald Lockley. (Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1980. 176 pages; 10 line-drawings. Paperback £1.25.) The story of R. M. Lockley's 13 years living on Skokholm, Pembrokeshire, Dyfed, entertainingly written by a naturalist with a natural gift for story telling. **Orielton.** By Ronald

Lockley. (Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1980. 364 pages; 12 line-drawings. Paperback £1.50.) Full of thoughts, facts and reminiscences: a splendid read from a talented pen. **Birdwatching: a Kingfisher leisure**

guide. By Steve Madge. (Ward Lock, London 1980. 125 pages; many colour photographs; some line-drawings. £2.50.) Novice birdwatchers have a wide choice of books to guide them through their first year or so in ornithology. This one is full of sound advice and will do nothing but good. Gremlins (or non-ornithological designers) have, however, been at work, with the first major colour picture in the book (Great Spotted Woodpeckers) misplaced through 90° and some strangely labelled drawings: clearly, an ornithologist should have been allowed to check page-proofs before publication. **Cage and Aviary Birds.** By Richard Mark Martin. **Illustrated by Malcolm Ellis.** (Collins, London, 1980. 256 pages; numerous colour illustrations. Hardback £6.50; paperback £3.95.) Although nine of the colour plates are devoted to budgerigars, eight to canaries and 16 to various parrots, there are also colour illustrations of over 200 other cage-birds, many of which could well escape and provide

tantalisingly difficult identification problems for birdwatchers (some, of course, are currently in Category D of the British and Irish list). The colour illustrations are the best which I have seen in any cage-bird guide; worth buying for tracking down the identity of that next 'hoodwink'. **The Birds Around Us: New Zealand birds, their habits and habitats.** By Geoff Moon. (Heinemann, Auckland, 1980. 207 pages; 357 colour plates. £20.00.) A total of 357 colour plates, all of them magnificent, excellently reproduced. **The Merlins of the Welsh Marches.** By D. A. Orton. (David & Charles, Newton Abbot, 1980. 168 pages; four black-and-white plates. £6.50.) Observations on Merlins during 1971-74, written for your entertainment by someone who clearly gains *his* entertainment by tracking down, watching and guarding over these small, elusive and vulnerable raptors. Full of vivid descriptions of enthusiastically observed incidents; excellent light reading. **Song-birds.** By Karel Štastný; illustrated by Petr Rob. (Hamlyn, London, New York, Sydney & Toronto, 1980. 216 pages; many colour illustrations, some distribution maps and line-drawings. £2.95.) Translated from the original Czechoslovakian, some 100 species are covered, with texts obviously written mainly to interest the beginner. There are many useful small line-drawings to show nest-sites and so on. Unfortunately, the main illustrations do not match the texts: the birds often look wooden, stance and shape are often wrong and the colour shades are frequently incorrect (a far cry from the excellence of Lars Jonsson's work, for instance). **The Great Bird Illustrators and their Art 1730-1930.** By Peyton Skipwith. (Hamlyn, London, 1979. 176 pages; 65 colour plates. £7.50.) This book draws on nearly 200 plates which originally decorated the back pages of the part-work *Birds of the World* (1969). Peyton Skipwith has made the best of his task to trace the development of the illustrated bird book by selecting 65 plates from this collection although, inevitably, he had, at times, a rather unbalanced choice. Thorburn has three plates, but Gould has 12, and Bewick, who worked in black and white, cannot be included. The brief essays on the 15 artists, and the extended captions to each plate, are well researched with much cogent comment. [ROBERT GILLMOR] **Bird Student: an autobiography.** By (George Miksch Sutton. (University of Texas Press, Austin & London, 1980. 216

pages; 10 colour illustrations; 10 black-and-white illustrations. £9.60.) Autobiography of the George Lynn Cross Research Professor Emeritus of Zoology and Curator of Birds at the Stovall Museum of Science and History in the University of Oklahoma; ranges from raising young roadrunners, sailing in Arctic waters and hunting bears to delivering speeches in Pennsylvania. **A Guide to Seabirds on the Ocean Routes.** By Gerald Tuck. Illustrated by Norman Arlott. (Collins, London, 1980. 144 pages; 53 line-drawings. £4.50.) A total of 25 ocean routes (e.g. the British Isles to east coasts of Canada and USA; Cape Town to Buenos Aires) are considered, with those birds likely to be seen mentioned for each stage of the journey. This companion to the same author's *A Field Guide to the Seabirds of Britain and the World* (1978) would certainly be in my suitcase if I was undertaking any of the sea-journeys covered. Norman Arlott's attractive line-drawings are clearly intended to be evocative and decorative and not mainly for identification purposes. **Plovers.** By Richard Vaughan. (Terence Dalton Ltd, Lavenham, 1980. 152 pages; 70 colour and 70 black-and-white photographs by the author. £7.95.) There are surprisingly few books on waders, so this well-produced one is particularly welcome. It can be recommended as a good general introduction to those members of the Charadriidae breeding in Britain and Ireland, though the handling of the taxonomy of the family as a whole is rather weak and out of date. For the plover specialist, the main attractions are the excellent series of photographs and Prof. Vaughan's own observations on plover behaviour which supplement the coverage of the literature. [K. E. L. SIMMONS] **The Island Waterfowl.** By Milton W. Weller. (Iowa State University Press, Ames, Iowa, USA, 1980. 121 pages; many black-and-white illustrations. \$10.95.) An authoritative and fascinating account of the many ducks endemic to tropical and southern hemisphere oceanic islands. Adaptations to island life include plumage changes, reduced reproductive rates and, often, flightlessness. This last increases the vulnerability of the tiny populations of island waterfowl, threatened principally by introduced animals. [MAO] **Butterfly Watching.** By Paul Whalley. (Severn House, London, 1980. 160 pages; 26 colour plates; 41 black-and-white plates. £7.95.) British ones; how to watch and gain enjoyment; well produced. (JTRS)

Reviews

Handbook of the Birds of Europe, the Middle East and North Africa. The Birds of the Western Palearctic. Volume II. Hawks to Bustards. Edited by Stanley Cramp (chief editor) and K. E. L. Simmons, Robert Gillmor, P. A. D. Hollom, Robert Hudson, E. M. Nicholson, M. A. Ogilvie, P. J. S. Olney, C. S. Roselaar, K. H. Voous, D. I. M. Wallace and Jan Wattel. Oxford University Press, 1980. 695 pages; 96 colour plates, numerous line-drawings, maps and diagrams. £30.00.

This second in the proposed series of seven volumes of *BWP* deals with diurnal birds of prey, grouse and other gamebirds, crakes, rails, cranes and bustards. In all, 12 main authors and innumerable assistants and correspondents have been involved in compiling it. The aim seems to have been to pull together in one place all worthwhile information currently available on each species from an extensive and scattered literature, most of it not readily available to the ordinary reader. The layout is the same as in the previous volume, based primarily on species accounts, with more information given for regular breeders and migrants than for vagrants. The paintings for this volume are by Peter Hayman, Ian Willis, and C. J. F. Coombs, the latter also providing some pleasing line-drawings to illustrate behaviour.

The depth of detail available on status and distribution inevitably varies greatly from one region to another, but the sections concerned are generally more advanced than those in Volume I, because of the recent publication of the results of 'Atlas' schemes for several European countries, and the particular detail in which birds of prey have been surveyed in recent years. The elusive *Porzana* crakes offer problems, however, as do the Corncrake and the Quail, whose distributions may change greatly from year to year. The sections on field characters take special account of the identification problems posed by many raptors, and, in addition to the usual plates, the volume includes some good flight silhouettes by Ian Willis.

The high standard set by the previous volume has been fully maintained. One is left with great admiration for the enormous amount of work achieved, and for the generally high degree of accuracy with which research results are reported. For the English reader, the work has no serious rival and, even with the present thrust of ornithological knowledge, these volumes should stand unchallenged as the standard work of reference for at least a generation.

Having said all this, however, the purpose of any review must be to cast a few shadows. The book is written in the curiously clipped language that we have come to expect of ornithological handbooks, presumably developed for reasons of economy. Yet there is considerable repetition between the different sections on each species, and even within the same section. Thus, we are told seven times that Kestrel numbers fluctuate in parallel with rodent-prey numbers, and no less than five times in one half-page. In the food section, for each species after a general review, the procedure has been to work through one study after another, giving full details of each food-species eaten: I felt that much of this information could have been condensed without serious loss. For, with this amount of detail, one has to read especially carefully not to miss the occasional key sentence of generalisation or synthesis.

Another inevitable feature of this type of work is that most information is presented as fact, with little or no supporting documentation, so that the reader has no way (without checking the source) of assessing the accuracy or validity of most of it. There is an implication, for example, that Kestrels construct substantial stick-nests (page 298), but, so far as I know, nest-building has not been recorded for any falcon. It also seems ridiculous to suggest that a bird the size of a Goshawk seldom hunts near human settlements on the grounds that few House Sparrows are recorded as kills (page 153).

It is in this attempt to pack in the detail that critical evaluation of the data becomes subservient. Often, several studies are quoted on a subject as though they were of equal merit. Yet, on consulting the sources, one may find that some are no more than casual observations based on few records, while others are thorough long-term studies, based on large and representative samples. On any one species, there are often a few papers—out of the many quoted—that are key ones, central to our understanding of that species. It would have been space well spent if such key references had been listed at the end of each species account, as a help to future workers.

In the enormity of the task, however, these are minor grumbles, and some of the points I have mentioned stem inevitably from any work of this type, in which authors are constrained by limitations of space and layout. On the whole, one can only view with praise the way that this mammoth project has been accomplished. At today's prices, the book is good value, and has been nicely produced, with a text remarkably free from typographical errors. It will be an invaluable addition to any ornithological library.

I. NEWTON

The Focal Guide to Bird Photography. By Michael W. Richards. Focal Press, London, 1980. 158 pages; 16 black-and-white and eight colour plates. £3.25.

It is 24 years since Focal Press published John Warham's *Technique of Bird Photography*; why they did not just issue an updated edition of that book is not clear, but they have chosen to produce now a new book on the topic in their long-established 'Focal Guide' series, which offers rather elementary instruction on a now very comprehensive set of aspects of the photographic craft.

Their chosen author is Michael Richards, one of the younger (indeed, perhaps the youngest) of the 'established' UK bird-photographers.

This book follows the house style of simplicity, directness and mild didacticism. There are points in this complex subject on which others might differ, but nothing to which one could take exception. A conversational attitude is prominent throughout—perhaps overdone on occasions (e.g. the recommended intervals between moves of hide, at least for common and normally tame breeding birds).

The chapter order is a little illogical, opening with 'Birds in the Garden' followed by 'Equipment and Film', 'Birds at the Nest' and then 'Hides', but one suspects that this was imposed by the publishers. Errors of fact are few. One that attracted my attention was the statement concerning radio control that 'licences are needed in the UK and are expensive': in fact, they were never expensive and are now gratis, but the trouble is that they are simply not available. Any schoolboy can get a licence to use 27 Mhz equipment to operate his model boats on his local pond, but an experienced adult cannot get a licence to use exactly the same equipment to operate a camera: surely one of the stupidest pieces of extant UK law.

The diagrammatic illustrations are, as usual with the Focal Guides series, clear and rather elementary, though the hide diagram on page 59 is excellent. The photographic plates are well chosen and well printed, particularly the colour plates.

This is not a book which will give new ideas to practising bird-photographers—nor was it intended to do so—but it could well be a valuable introduction to the craft for birdwatchers who are at present not photographers. To them, I recommend it.

D. M. T. ETTLINGER

Birdwatcher's Yearbook 1981. Edited by John E. Pemberton. Buckingham Press, Maids Moreton, 1980. 320 pages; numerous black-and-white illustrations and photographs. £4.95.

One's immediate reaction on looking through this book is 'Why didn't I think of this?', or 'Why has this never been done before?' As a general reference book, which will presumably be updated and issued annually from now on, it will prove immensely useful in many ways to a large and varied readership. I expect my copy to become dog-eared and heavily annotated long before the 1982 edition is available.

It is in two parts. The first contains nine 'feature articles', themselves all useful for reference purposes as well as intrinsically interesting, written by invited contributors on subjects as diverse as atlassing, taxidermy, bird gardening and birding in Guernsey. The second, which takes up more than three-quarters of the book, is the 'reference section' and it is this which gives the book its immediate value and which will hopefully ensure its annual publication in future. Addresses, relevant details and assorted information are given on Bird Observatories; Nature Reserves; National Organisations; Nature Conservation Trusts; Local Clubs and Societies; Bird Recorders; Fieldwork and Projects; Bird Protection Legislation; Codes of Practice and Behaviour; Survey of Bird Books; Book Reviews; Bird Reports; Journal Articles;

Bird Sound Recordings; Ornithological Libraries; Museum Bird Collections; Ornithological Conferences; Competitions; Bird Topography; Breeding Bird Records; Bird Regions of the World; the National Grid; and Abbreviations. The final entry, which in itself will sell a few extra copies, is the British and Irish List, up-to-date at January 1980, complete with boxes to tick! The whole book is liberally studded with 'ornithological adverts', most of which are also useful points of reference in themselves.

Nitpickers may find a few errors or omissions, and obviously the book will be out-of-date in a few details here and there, but the Editor welcomes comments, corrections and suggestions, so be sure to send them to him when (as you should) you buy this book. You will find much useful background information here which might take you hours to glean from other sources: if there are half-a-dozen books which are 'musts' in any birder's collection, this surely has to be one of them.

MIKE EVERETT

Portrait of a Country Artist. C. F. Tunnicliffe RA. 1901-1979. By Ian Niall. Victor Gollancz, London, 1980. 160 pages; 196 illustrations, over 70 in colour. £10.00.

An admirable and richly illustrated celebration of the life and work of one of the finest artists to have drawn inspiration from the British countryside and, particularly, the birds he studied around his homes in Cheshire and, from 1947, on Anglesey. The illustrations reveal Tunnicliffe's considerable range, with early etchings and engravings, drawings for books and advertisements, paintings in oil and watercolour, sketchbook pages and nine of the great series of measured bird studies which whet one's appetite for more. Over half the illustrations are of birds. A must for all who enjoy birds and bird art, and excellent value too! ROBERT GILLMOR

Corrections and additions

VOLUME 72

Pages

446-449 'County, regional and bird observatory recorders in Britain and Ireland'.

There are the following changes or corrections to the list:

Essex Delete '& J. Thorogood, 3 Sceptre Close, Tollesbury, Essex CM9 8NB.'

Lancashire M. Jones, 5 Lambert Road, Ribbleson, Preston PR2 6YQ.

Somerset Delete 'Report covers the old county of Somerset, thus including south Avon.'

Fife (except Forth Islands) and Kinross-shire K. Brockie, 'The Gardener's Cottage, Millhill House, Inchtute, Perthshire.

501 Sequential breeding by Golden Plovers. Case 2. Line 8. '2nd July' should read '2nd June'.

VOLUME 73

Pages

73 Raptors in urban areas during hard weather. Line 16. '23rd' should read '17th'.

181 Line 9. 'features' should read 'feathers'.

182 Line 2. 'through' should read 'throughout'.

196-197 Western Palearctic rarities committees. Add

POLAND Dr Ludwik Tomiałojć (Chairman), Avifaunistic Commission, Wrocław University, Museum of Natural History, Sienkiewicza 21, 50-335 Wrocław.

315 Bittern-like posture of juvenile Treecreepers. Line 4. 'Avon' should read 'Gloucestershire'.

425 Underwings of Little Auk and Puffin. Line 9. 'underwing' should read 'upperwing'.

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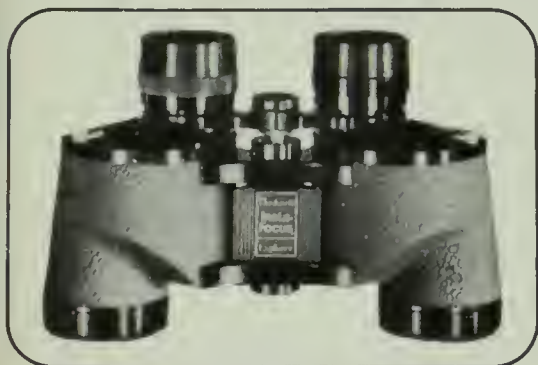
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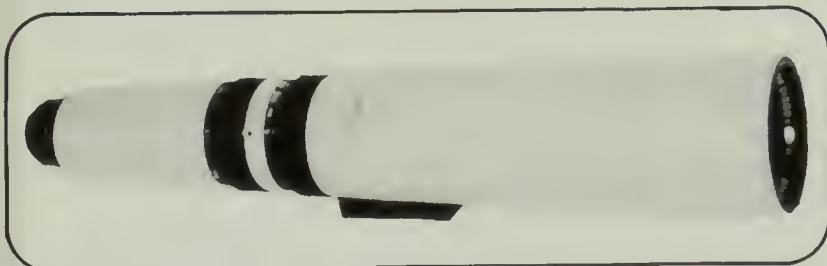
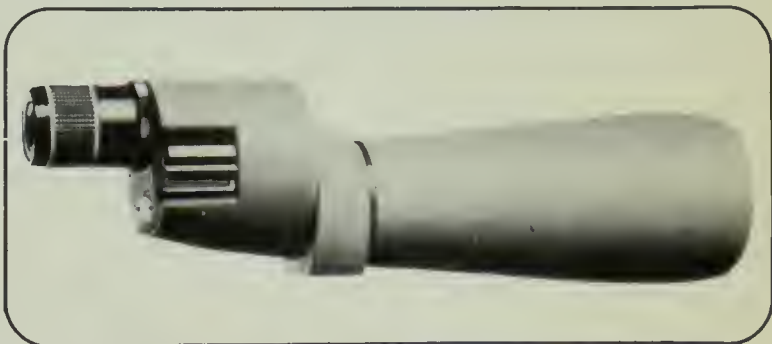
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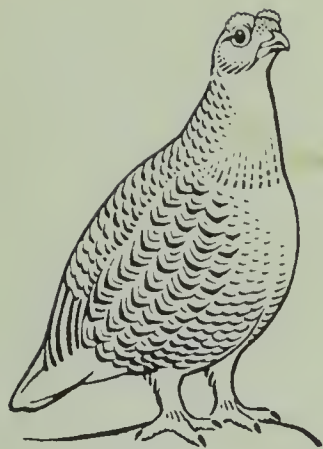
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Compiled by Mrs N. D. Blamire

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(1) every significant mention of each species, not only in titles, but also within the text of papers, notes and letters, including all those appearing in such lists as the 'Report on rare birds in Great Britain in 1979', but excluding those in 'Recent reports', 'News and comment', requests and reviews;

(2) scientific nomenclature under generic names only and following *The 'British Birds' List of Birds of the Western Palearctic* (1978);

(3) authors of all papers, notes, reviews and letters, and photographers; papers are referred to by their titles, other contributions as 'note on', 'review of', etc.;

(4) a few subject headings, i.e. 'Breeding', 'Display', 'Editorial', 'Field characters', 'Food', 'Migration', 'News and comment', 'Obituaries', 'Rarities Committee', 'Recorders', 'Reports', 'Requests', 'Roosting' and 'Voice';

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